



Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's  
Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt

*Subtleties of the Allusions*

*Great Commentaries  
on the Holy Qur'ān*

Part I

Sūrah 4–1



Royal Aal al-Bayt  
Institute for  
Islamic Thought

FONS VITAE



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## In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to God who has opened the hearts of His friends (*awliyā*)<sup>1</sup> with knowledge (*irfān*) of Him and made the way of the Real<sup>2</sup> clear by the glimmering of His proof for those who desire His path (*tarīqa*). He has granted insight (*baṣīra*)<sup>3</sup> to those who seek realization of Him. He revealed the Criterion<sup>4</sup> as a guidance and exposition to His chosen one Muḥammad (may God bless him and his family and give them peace) as a miracle and clarification. He placed knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and interpretation (*ta'wīl*)<sup>5</sup> of it in the breasts of the scholars (*ulamā*), honoring them with knowledge (*ilm*) of its stories and revelation and providing them with faith in its clear, ambiguous, abrogating and abrogated<sup>6</sup> [verses], and its promises and threats. He honored the chosen ones (*aṣfiyā*) among His servants with understanding the subtleties (*laṭā'if*) of the secrets He placed in it. He selected them<sup>7</sup> to have insight into the intricacy of the allusions (*ishārāt*)<sup>8</sup> He included in it and the secret of its symbols (*rumūz*) in the hidden things He has shown to their innermost selves (*asrār*).<sup>9</sup> They understand, because of what they have been accorded from the lights of the Unseen, what has been concealed from others. Then they speak based on the ranks of their lights and capabilities,<sup>10</sup> and the Real (*swt*) inspires them by that which He honors them. Through Him they speak of [the Book], tell of its subtleties, allude to it and speak eloquently of it. The judgment goes back to Him in all that they mention or pass over.

Imām Jamāl al-Islām Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (*r*) said: Our book includes some of the Qur'ānic allusions (*ishārāt*) ascribed to the people of knowing (*ma'rifa*),<sup>11</sup> either from the meanings which they have said or their fundamental premises. We have been brief out of fear of wearying [the reader], seeking the help of God Most High with the benefits of grace, absolving ourselves from all power and strength, seeking refuge from error and defect,<sup>12</sup> asking for the most correct speech and action, and requesting blessings on our master

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the term 'friends' (*awliyā*) and other words al-Qushayrī uses to describe human beings with a special relationship with God, see the Translator's Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> The word that al-Qushayrī most frequently uses to refer to God is 'the Real' (*al-ḥaqq*), which can also be translated as 'the Truth'.

<sup>3</sup> MS K177, f. 1a has the word 'help' (*naṣr*) here instead of *baṣīra*.

<sup>4</sup> i.e., the Qur'ān, which is the word found in MS K117, f. 1a.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the term *ta'wīl* throughout his commentary to refer to rational interpretation of the Qur'ān. His use of the term is sometimes descriptive, as it is here, but more frequently it has a negative connotation.

<sup>6</sup> 'Abrogated' (*mansūkh*) has been added on the basis of MS K117, f. 1a.

<sup>7</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition, which has been completed with *istakhlaṣahum* from MS K117, f. 1a.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Qushayrī distinguishes the 'subtleties' (*laṭā'if*) and 'allusions' (*ishārāt*) of Sufi commentaries from commentaries based on rational interpretation (*ta'wīl*) or explanatory exegesis (*tafsīr*).

<sup>9</sup> See the Translator's Introduction for a discussion of the terms al-Qushayrī uses for the different elements of the human constitution.

<sup>10</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1a here: *marātib anwārihim wa aqdārihim*.

<sup>11</sup> This is one of many terms al-Qushayrī uses for 'Sufis'. See the Translator's Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> Instead of 'defect' (*khalal*), the MS K117, f. 1a has 'corrupt speech' (*khaṭal*).

Muḥammad (ṣ), and seeking His aid<sup>13</sup> so that He may complete for us the best outcome by His grace and favors. The undertaking in beginning this book was made possible in the months of the year 434/1042-3,<sup>14</sup> and through God will be its completion, if God Most High, may He be glorified and exalted, wills.

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<sup>13</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1a here in adding ‘seeking aid’ (*mutaḍḍari ʿīn*).

<sup>14</sup> The MS K117, f. 1a has the date 437/1045-6.

## *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*

This sura is called the opening (*fātiḥa*)<sup>15</sup> of the Book. By initiating the [Divine] Address and the Book to the lovers with it, there is the most sublime happiness and the noblest good because it is the cause of communion<sup>16</sup> and lays the groundwork for it.<sup>17</sup> Regarding its meaning it is said:

*I will ransom you even  
with all the days of my life,  
a ransom of days in which  
I came to know you.*<sup>18</sup>

And it is said:

*May God bless my having become  
acquainted with you.  
Without that there would have been  
no place for passion in my heart.*<sup>19</sup>

The Messenger of God<sup>20</sup> (ﷺ) was not expecting what occurred and nothing like it had crossed his mind. When Gabriel (ﷺ) appeared to him, he began to flee. His preference would have been to distance himself from this affair. He sought refuge at the house of Khadīja,<sup>21</sup> saying, ‘Cover me, cover me. Wrap me up, wrap me up’. He used to practice devotions at Ḥirā’ and

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<sup>15</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1a here: *hādhihi l-sūra tusammī fātiḥat al-kitāb*.

<sup>16</sup> There is a blank in the Baysūnī edition, which has been completed from MS K117, f. 1a: *bi-sabab al-wiṣāl*.

<sup>17</sup> There is a blank in the Baysūnī edition, which has been completed with the phrase *ta’sīs al-ḥāl* from MS K117, f. 1a.

<sup>18</sup> This verse, which is incomplete in the Baysūnī edition, could not be located in Aḥmad Amīn Muṣṭafā’s *Takrīj abyāt laṭā’if al-ishārāt li-l-Imām al-Qushayrī*. The translation completes here it on the basis of the MS K117, f. 1a: *bi-fidā’i ayāmin ‘aratuka fihā*.

<sup>19</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to Abū Tammām. He also traces it to al-Shiblī in al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīyya* (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 47).

<sup>20</sup> *Rasūl Allāh* is inserted from MS K117, f. 1a

<sup>21</sup> The Prophet’s wife.

seclude himself there for days. The affair came on suddenly, an unexpected and surprising event, just as it is said:<sup>22</sup>

*Her passion came to me  
before I knew passion.  
It found my heart empty  
and took up residence.*<sup>23</sup>

He (ş) was content to have it said of him that he was an employee of Khadīja's, but the Real (swt) insisted that he be the chief of those who come first and last, for He said: *Yā Sīn. By the Qur'ān full of wisdom* [36:1]. Its meaning is 'O Chief' (*yā sayyid*).<sup>24</sup> He raised him to the most honored of ranks, even if he did not aspire to it with the slightest hope, in accordance with the way of God Most High to place His secrets only with one whose worthiness has been falsely underestimated. It was because of this that they were astonished about his situation. They said, 'How can He prefer the orphan of Abū Ṭālib among created beings?' But truly he (ş) was already chosen by Him (swt) in preference to all others of his kind.<sup>25</sup>

*This one, even if  
he were to appear in rags<sup>26</sup>  
and was in want  
of riches,  
  
is the one  
I prefer to praise  
over my brother,  
my neighbor,*

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<sup>22</sup> There are several blanks and minor discrepancies between the Basyūnī text and the MS K117, f. 1a text. The translation follows MS K117, f. 1a for this paragraph, since it is the more complete version.

<sup>23</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to Majnūn Laylā, *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 111).

<sup>24</sup> i.e., the letters *yā sīn* are sometimes said to be abbreviations for 'O chief' (*yā sayyid*).

<sup>25</sup> The translation again follows the text in MS K117, f. 1a for this paragraph since it is the more complete version.

<sup>26</sup> Basyūnī has a blank between *hadhā* and *aṭmār*, which has been filled in here from MS K117, f. 1a: *hadhā wa-in aṣbaḥa fī aṭmār*.

*and the possessor of dirhams*

*and dinars,*

*and the one with*

*much authority.*<sup>27</sup>

[Section] Before his prophecy he (ʃ) was considered by the people to have a praiseworthy character, a beautiful and commendable reputation, and was considered trustworthy (*amīn*) by everyone. They used to call him Muḥammad al-Amīn. But when these circumstances occurred, they changed his name, distorted how he was described, and disparaged his reputation. One person would say he was a magician, another would say a soothsayer, another a liar, and another a poet:<sup>28</sup>

*They spread in the clan*

*the ugliest story for us.*

*They had been peace for us*

*but they became for us war.*<sup>29</sup>

Talk of love,<sup>30</sup> then, is never spared from censure. Yet as it is said:

*I find blame in passion*

*for you delicious.*

*Out of love of hearing you mentioned,*

*let them blame me.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Muṣṭafā notes the differences between these lines and the lines quoted in *Tazyīn al-Aswāq* and another collection of poetry. He doesn't give the name of the poet but explains the story behind the verses, which has to do with a young man who tells the Caliph Mu'āwīya the story of his wife being taken from him by her father (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 58).

<sup>28</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1a for this paragraph since it is the more complete version.

<sup>29</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace these verses to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 27).

<sup>30</sup> The translation follows the phrase *ḥadīth al-maḥabba* from MS K117, f.1b instead of the phrase *ṣifat al-muḥibb* found in the Basyūnī version.

<sup>31</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū al-Shīṣ, and gives numerous books in which it is cited. He also attributes it to 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ja'farī b. Abī Tālib (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 103). Al-Qushayrī cites this same verse in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 3:37 below.

What harm is there to him from their ugly speech, when the Real (swt) has said: *And verily We know that your breast is [at times] oppressed by what they say. So glorify the praise of your Lord* [15:97-8]. That is to say, ‘Listen to what is said about you [and respond] with beautiful praise for Us’.

This sura is also called the mother (*umm*) of the Book. The mother (*umm*) of something is its source, and the leader (*imām*)<sup>32</sup> of anything is the one who is given precedence (*muqaddam*). Because this sura includes something on the matter of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*) [as well as] praise of God in the beauty of His Lordship (*rubūbiyya*), its perfection is from the excellent qualities without which obligations are not sound. [The Prophet] (s) related from [Allāh] (swt): *I have divided the prayer in halves between Me and My servant*,<sup>33</sup> which means the recitation of this sura. So it became the mother of the Book and a source for the subtleties of special gifts (*laṭā’if al-karāmāt*) and the wonders of being drawn near and [the] obligation [of being a servant].

### 1:1 *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*

The *bā’* in *bismillāh* [‘in the Name of God’] is a grammatical particle of implication. That is to say ‘by means of God’ (*bi-llāh*), new things become manifest and by means of Him created things exist. There is nothing from any newly created thing (*ḥādith makhḷūq*) or sequence of events (*ḥāṣil mansūq*); or from any perceived thing (*‘ayn*) or trace of a thing (*athar*), etc.; or anything else from rocks or clay, grass or trees,<sup>34</sup> any impression left on the ground (*rasm*) or standing remains (*ṭalal*),<sup>35</sup> or any judgment (*ḥukm*) or causes (*‘ilal*), that has existence except by means of the Real. The Real is its sovereign. Its beginning is from the Real and its return is to the Real. Through Him the one who declares the unity [of God] finds and through Him the rejecter abandons faith. Through Him the one who acknowledges knows, and through Him the one who perpetrates lags behind.<sup>36</sup>

He said, ‘*In the Name of God*’ rather than ‘In God’. According to some people, this is a way of seeking blessing through mentioning His name. According to others, it is because of the difference between this [wording] and oaths. According to scholars, it is because the name (*ism*) is the thing that is named (*musammā*). In the view of the people of mystical knowledge

<sup>32</sup> The words *umm* and *imām* come from the same root: *a-m-m*.

<sup>33</sup> In his reprinting of the Basyūnī edition of al-Qushayrī’s *Laṭā’if al-ishārāt*, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān provides additional information on the *ḥadīth* al-Qushayrī quotes. He notes that this *ḥadīth* can be found in al-Tirmidhī, Al-Sunan 2953, as well as in other collections.

<sup>34</sup> Qur’ānic verse 55:6 uses these two words: *and the grass and trees prostrate*.

<sup>35</sup> For the use of classical Arabic *nasīb* terms such as *rasm* and *ṭalal* by al-Qushayrī and other Sufis, see Michael’s Sells’ *Early Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 56-74 and p. 338, footnote 43. Note the mixing of terms from different types of discourse (i.e., the Qur’ān, poetry and theology) in this paragraph. Al-Qushayrī uses these types of discourse throughout his commentary, but doesn’t usually mix them in a single sentence, as he does here.

<sup>36</sup> This sentence has a noteworthy rhyming pattern: *fā-bihi wajada man waḥḥada wa-bihi jaḥada man alḥada wa-bihi ‘arafa man i‘tarafa wa-bihi takhallafa man iqtarafa*.



(*‘irfān*), [the wording is such] in order to seek the purification of hearts from attachments and the liberation of the innermost selves from obstacles so that the word ‘God’ may enter into a clean heart and purified innermost self.

Upon the mention of this verse, some people are reminded from the [letter] *bā’* of His beneficence (*birr*) with His friends, and from the [letter] *sīn* of His secret (*sirr*) with his chosen ones, and from the [letter] *mīm* of His grace (*minna*) to the people of His friendship (*ahl al-walāya*). They know that by His beneficence, they come to know His secret, and by His grace to them, they preserve His command, and by Him (glory be to Him Most High) they recognize His measure.<sup>37</sup>

Other people, upon hearing ‘In the Name of God’, are reminded by the [letter] *bā’* of the immunity (*barā’a*) of God (*swt*) from every evil, and by the [letter] *sīn* of His soundness (*salāma*) from any defect, and by the [letter] *mīm* of His magnificence (*majd*) in the exaltedness of His description.

Others are reminded at the [letter] *bā’* of His splendor (*baḥā’*), and at the [letter] *sīn* of His radiance (*sanā’*), and at the [letter] *mīm* of His dominion (*mulk*).

Because God (*swt*) has repeated the verse *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful* in every sura and it has been established that it is part of them, we want to mention in every sura non-repetitive and non-reiterative utterances taken from the allusions of this verse. Because of this we will not<sup>38</sup> examine the words exhaustively here. Through Him there is confidence.

### [1:2] *Praise be to God;*

The real meaning of praise (*ḥamd*) is extolling the One Who is praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*) by mentioning His sublime attributes and beautiful acts. The [letter] *lām* here [from the particle *al* in *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*] indicates an all-comprehensive category,<sup>39</sup> since all praiseworthy acts are God’s (*s*), either by attribution (*waṣf*) or creation (*khalq*). Praise belongs to Him because of the manifestation of His sovereign power, and gratitude belongs to Him because of the abundance of His goodness.<sup>40</sup> Praise belongs to God because of what He is due for His

<sup>37</sup> Unlike those mentioned in Qur’ānic verses who *measured not God with His true measure* (6:91, 22:74, 39:67).

<sup>38</sup> The negative particle *lām* is missing in the Basyūnī edition but has been added on the basis of MS K117, f. 1b.

<sup>39</sup> The particle *al* corresponds to the word ‘the’ in English.

<sup>40</sup> Throughout this passage, al-Qushayrī uses rhyming patterns to great rhetorical effect, as in these two sentences: *lahu al-ḥamdu li-ẓuhūri sulṭānihi wa-lahu al-shukru li-wufūri iḥsānihi*.

sublimity and His beauty, and gratitude belongs to God because of the plentitude of His favors and the preciousness of His gifts. The praise for Him (*s*) which is from Him is from the attributes of His perfection and power,<sup>41</sup> and the praise of Him which is from His creation is by virtue of His favors and His might. His sublimity and His beauty are His due because of the attributes of grandeur. They are His entitlement because of the qualities of exaltedness and loftiness. Eternal existence belongs to Him. Noble generosity belongs to Him.<sup>42</sup> Unique permanence belongs to Him, as do everlasting being, eternal remaining, endless splendor, and perpetual praise.<sup>43</sup> Hearing and seeing belong to Him, as do fate and divine decree, word and speech, might and power, mercy and generosity, essence (*‘ayn*) and existence (*wujūd*), and the beautiful face (*al-wajhu dhū ‘l-jamāl*) and the sublime measure (*al-qadru dhū ‘l-jalāl*).<sup>44</sup> He is the One, Most High. His grandeur is His garment, His loftiness His brilliance, His magnificence His exaltedness, His being His essence, His eternity without beginning His everlasting eternity, His timelessness His endless eternity, His truth (*al-ḥaqq*) His self (*al-nafs*),<sup>45</sup> and His permanence His essence. His perpetuity is His remaining, His decree (*qadā’*) His fate (*qadar*), His sublimity His beauty, His prohibition His command, His wrath His mercy, and His desire (*irāda*) His will (*mashī’a*). He is the King by His invincibility (*jabarūt*) and the One in His dominion (*malakūt*). God the blessed and glorified! Glory be to Him, how weighty is His affair!

[Section] The Real (*swt*) knows the intensity of the spiritual desire (*irāda*) of His friends to praise and extol Him and their inability to perform the praise due to Him in accordance with His exaltedness and radiance. Therefore He informed them that He has praised Himself in the opening of His address in His words, **Praise be to God**, and they are revived after being lowly and experience life after deadening, and their innermost selves take on the perfection of strength [through God], for they have heard the praise of the Real about the Real in the speech of the Real. They explain the symbol as a matter of appearances, saying:

*A moon is attributable to her face*

*because of her face [itself].*

*Kohl is attributable to her eyes*

*because of her eyes [themselves].<sup>46</sup>*

<sup>41</sup> Instead of *kamāl* and *ḥawl*, the MS K117, f. 1b has *kalām* and *qawl*.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Qushayrī presents the attributes of God in rhyming pairs, as in these two sentences: *lahu al-wujūd ‘l-qadīm wa-lahu al-jūd ‘l-karīm*.

<sup>43</sup> The MS K117, f. 1b includes the additional words ‘everlasting loftiness, knowledge, will, judgment, sovereignty, power, life, names, and attributes’ here.

<sup>44</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1b text here, from ‘essence’ (*‘ayn*) to the end of the sentence, since this version more faithfully reflects al-Qushayrī’s rhyming patterns.

<sup>45</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 1b here with ‘His self’ (*naṣṣuḥu*) over ‘His certainty’ *yaqīnuḥu*, as found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>46</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes this to al-Rashīd and Al-Inbā’ (Muṣṭafā no. 1, p. 92).

When the Prophet, the speaker to the first and the last, the master of those who use language skillfully, and the leader of those who are eloquent, heard His praise of Himself and His laudation of His Truth, he knew that holding one's tongue is what is most appropriate in this situation. He said: *'There is no way to enumerate the praise due to You, You are as You have praised Yourself'*.<sup>47</sup>

*If only her words  
had reached David's ears  
he would not have sung  
his melodies.*<sup>48</sup>

*Su'ād sang  
with her voice and  
the melodies of David  
became mute in embarrassment.*<sup>49</sup>

[Section] The classes of those who give praise are different because of the disparity in their states. One group praises Him based on what they have obtained in the favors and kindnesses He grants through His helping and defending, removing and granting. What they understand concerning His goodness to them is no more than what they acknowledge of His favors with them. [God] (may His mention be exalted) said: *And if you were to count God's grace, you could never reckon it* [14:34 and 16:18]. Another group praises Him based on what He has made to appear<sup>50</sup> to their hearts (*qulūb*) from the wonders of His kindnesses, and the hidden things His beneficence has placed in the inner secrets of their hearts (*sarā'ir*), and what He has unveiled to their innermost selves (*asrār*) from the secret of His Unseen, and what He has singled out for their spirits (*arwāḥ*) from the flashes of intuition of His glories. Other people praise Him upon witnessing what is unveiled to them through Him regarding the attributes of eternity. After observing [His] exaltedness and nobleness, they no longer pay any attention to favors or allotments. There is a difference between those who praise Him for His exalted sublimity and those who give thanks to Him for the existence of His favors, just as the one who spoke for them said:

*It was not poverty that drove us away*

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<sup>47</sup> One of the sources 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives for this *ḥadīth* is Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 6:58.

<sup>48</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, p. 47).

<sup>49</sup> These lines do not appear in Muṣṭafā. The translation follows MS K117, f. 2a with the word 'became mute' (*takhārasat*) over Basyūnī's 'were left helpless' (*takhādharat*).

<sup>50</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 2a *alāḥa* over Basyūnī's *lāḥa*.

*from the land of kinsfolk.*

*We were just happy*

*to meet with you for a time.*<sup>51</sup>

Other people praise Him, annihilated in the expressions of praise that have caused them to speak. They speak through the realities of declaring His unity, which have eradicated their innermost selves. They speak of Him through Him and allude to Him through Him. The decrees flow over them,<sup>52</sup> turning them this way and that. Their outward condition is protected by the attribute of separation, while their innermost selves are seized by the force of the union of union (*jam* ' *al-jam* ').<sup>53</sup> As they say,

*The explanation of the explanation of the Real,*

*You are its explanation*

*Every meaning of the Unseen,*

*You are its mouthpiece.*<sup>54</sup>

#### [1:2 cont'd] *Lord of all Worlds*

The **Lord** (*rabb*) is the 'chief' (*sayyid*), and the **Worlds** are all created things. What is being specified in the plural term 'worlds' includes rational beings and inanimate things, for He is the Master (*mālik*) of perceived things (*a 'yān*).<sup>55</sup> He brings them into being and, through what is in them, brings into existence the outward markings and dwellings [that characterize them].

His name **Lord** (*rabb*) also indicates the cultivation (*tarbiya*) of created beings, since he is the caretaker (*murabbīn*) of the souls of the worshippers ( *'ābidīn*) through the giving of support (*ta 'yīd*), the caretaker of the hearts of seekers (*ṭālibīn*) by giving direction (*tasdīd*), and the caretaker of the spirits of the knowers ( *'ārifīn*) by the affirmation of unity (*tawhīd*).<sup>56</sup> He is

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<sup>51</sup> Muṣṭafā says the verse is mentioned in *Risālat Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* and attributed there to Abū Naṣr al-Mikālī. He also provides two other versions from other sources (Muṣṭafā no. 7, p. 44). The translation follows MS K117, f. 2a in 'for a time' (*hīn<sup>am</sup>*).

<sup>52</sup> The verb *tajrī* from MS K117, f. 2a makes more sense here than the verb *yujrī* in the Baysūnī edition.

<sup>53</sup> *Jam* ' can also be translated as 'gathering'. Al-Qushayrī discusses this term in relation to 'separation' (*farq*) in the sections on 'Union and Separation' (*al-jam* ' *wa 'l-farq*) and 'The Union of the Union' (*al-jam* ' *wa 'l-jam* ') in the *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 207-10).

<sup>54</sup> Muṣṭafā notes a similar but more succinct version of this verse which can be found in the *Diwān* of al-Hallāj (Muṣṭafā no. 29, p. 118).

<sup>55</sup> MS K117, f.2a reads 'everything other than Him' (*aghyār*) here.

<sup>56</sup> Note the paired rhyming pattern of *'ābidīn*, *ṭālibīn*, *'ārifīn* with *ta 'yīd*, *tasdīd*, *tawhīd* and in the next sentence with *arwāḥ* and *ashbāḥ*, and *wujūd* and *shuhūd*.

the caretaker of the bodily forms (*ashbāḥ*) by the finding (*wujūd*) of favors, and the caretaker of the spirits (*arwāḥ*) by the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of generosity.

The name **Lord** (*rabb*) also indicates His cultivation (*iṣlāḥ*) of the affairs of His servants. It is said, 'I tanned or seasoned (*rabaytu*) the hide'.<sup>57</sup> So He is the seasoner of the affairs of the ascetics (*zāhidīn*) in the beauty of his care (*ri'āya*), and He is the seasoner of the affairs of the worshippers (*ābidīn*) in the goodness of His sufficiency (*kifāya*), and He is the seasoner of the affairs of the ecstatics (*wājidīn*) in His eternal solicitude (*ināya*).<sup>58</sup> He improves the affairs of some and they are enriched by His gifts. He improves the affairs of others and they long to meet Him. He improves a third group and they are rightly directed towards meeting Him. The one who spoke for them said:

*As long as the stars of your glory*

*are fortunate*

*I don't care whether*

*people live or perish.*<sup>59</sup>

### [1:3] *The Compassionate, the Merciful*

Both names are derived from mercy (*raḥma*). Mercy is an eternal attribute and it is the [divine] desire for blessing (*irāda al-ni'ma*). According to the experts (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), these are two nouns denoting intensification with no distinction between the two [in terms of the recipients of the mercy].

It is said **the compassionate** (*al-raḥmān*) is the more emphatic and more complete in expressiveness. Nothing other than the Real (*s*) is called *raḥmān* without restriction, while **the merciful** (*al-raḥīm*) can be used to describe others. By means of His mercy the servant comes to know that He is the Compassionate. If not for His mercy no one would know that He is the Compassionate. Whether mercy is the desire for blessing or the blessing itself, as some would have it, the blessings themselves are varied and their degrees are different, for one blessing is a blessing for bodily forms (*ashbāḥ*) and outward circumstances (*ẓawāhir*) and the other blessing is a blessing for spirits (*arwāḥ*) and inner secrets of the heart (*sarā'ir*).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The translation follows the word *al-adīm* in MS K117, f. 2b rather than *al-'adīm* the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>58</sup> Again, note the paired rhyming patterns.

<sup>59</sup> This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>60</sup> Note the rhyming pairs of *ashbāḥ* and *arwāḥ* with *ẓawāhir* and *sarā'ir*.

In the system of those who distinguish between the two, *the Compassionate* (*raḥmān*) is a specific term with a general meaning, while *the Merciful* (*raḥīm*) is a general term with a specific meaning.<sup>61</sup> As the Compassionate, He provides comfort for all people in their external circumstances while the Merciful grants success to the believers for the life of the inner secrets of their hearts (*sarā'ir*). He is the Compassionate by that which He gives in comfort (*rawwaḥa*) and the Merciful by that which He gives in glimmers (*lawwaḥa*).<sup>62</sup> Giving comfort (*tarwīḥ*) is through acts of beneficence (*mabārr*) and the giving of glimmers (*talwīḥ*) is through lights (*anwār*). The Compassionate is with the unveiling of His manifestation (*tajallī*) while the Merciful is with the kindness of His being a friend and protector (*tawallī*). The Compassionate is with what He gives in faith (*īmān*) and the Merciful is with what He confers in knowledge (*'irfān*). Or the Compassionate is with what He grants in knowledge (*'irfān*) and *the Merciful* is with what He undertakes in forgiveness (*ghufrān*). Or the Compassionate is with what He gives in blessing in forgiveness (*ghufrān*) and the Merciful is with what He bestows in good pleasure (*riḍwān*). Or the Compassionate is with what He honors in good pleasure<sup>63</sup> and the Merciful is with what He gives in blessing in vision and eyewitnessing (*'iyān*). Or the Compassionate is with the success He gives and the Merciful is with what has been realized. Granting success (*tawfīq*) is for transactions and behaviors (*mu'āmalāt*) while realization (*taḥqīq*) is for intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*). The transactions and behaviors are for those who seek (*qāṣidūn*) and the intimate communications are for those who find (*wājidūn*). The Compassionate is with what He bestows as a favor for them and the Merciful is with what He deflects from them, for the bestowal of favors (*ṣan'*) is beautiful caretaking (*ri'āya*) and the defending (*daf'*) is the best solicitude (*'ināya*).<sup>64</sup>

#### [1:4] *Master of the day of Judgement.*

The master (*mālik*) is the one to whom sovereignty (*mulk*) belongs. The sovereignty of the Real (*swt*) is His power over creating (*ibdā'*). Master (*mālik*) is a more intensive form than King (*malik*)<sup>65</sup> and He (*s*) is both King and Master and sovereignty is His. Just as there is no god but He, there is none with the power to create except Him. He is alone in His divinity and singular in His sovereignty. He rules the souls of His worshippers (*'ābidīn*) for He has granted agency to them (*ṣarrafahā*) in His service. He rules the hearts of the knowers (*'ārifīn*) for He honors them (*sharrafahā*) with knowledge of Him. He rules the souls of the seekers (*qāṣidīn*) for He holds them in his thrall (*tayyamahā*). He rules the hearts of the ecstatics (*wājidūn*) for He bewilders them (*hayyamahā*).<sup>66</sup> He rules the bodily forms (*ashbāḥ*) of those who worship Him and He is kind to them with his gifts and favors. He rules the spirits

<sup>61</sup> Al-Qushayri means here that *raḥmān* refers only to Allah and His mercy to all beings, while *raḥīm* can be used to describe human beings in addition to Allah. When used to speak of Allah, it refers to His specific mercy to believers.

<sup>62</sup> By the verb *lawwaḥa* here, al-Qushayrī is referring to the 'glimmers' (*lawā'ih*) he discusses in the section on 'Glimmers, Gleams of the Rising, and Flashes' (*al-lawā'ih wa'l-tawālī wa'l-lawāmi'*) in his *Risāla*, where he compares the 'glimmers' to lightning (vol. 1, pp. 228-30).

<sup>63</sup> I'm following the MS K117, f. 2b here: *bal al-raḥmān bi-mā yukrim min al-riḍwān*.

<sup>64</sup> Note the rhyming patterns throughout this paragraph.

<sup>65</sup> Basyūnī has the reverse. The MS K117, f. 2b does not indicate an *alif* in either term here but it is probably just an omitted *alif kharjariyya*.

<sup>66</sup> Note the rhyming pattern in these four sentences.

(*arwāh*) of those whom He loves<sup>67</sup> and He unveils the attribute of His majesty to them and the quality of His beauty. [He is] the King of the reins of the lords of the profession of unity and He turns them about wherever He wills as He wills and He grants them success wherever He wills as He wills. He does not entrust them to themselves for even a moment. He does not transfer power to them in their affair for even the shortest period of time.<sup>68</sup> He is for them in place of themselves and He has annihilated them from themselves to Him.

[Section] His beneficence rules the hearts of the worshippers and they desire His gifts. His authority rules the hearts of those who declare unity and they are content with His abiding. He teaches the lords of the profession of union that He is their master (*mālik*) and their free choice (*ikhtiyār*) drops away from them. They come to know that the servant has no ownership, and the one who has no ownership has no governing power (*ḥukm*), and the one who has no governing power has no free choice. There is no turning away (*i' rāḍ*) from obedience to Him for them and no resistance (*i' tirāḍ*) to His governing power. There is no opposition (*mu' āraḍa*) to His free choice, and no undertaking (*ta' arruḍ*)<sup>69</sup> of disobedience to Him.

**The day of Judgement** is the day of recompense and resurrection, the day of reckoning and gathering. The Real (*swt*) repays each as He wishes and on the day of reckoning, there are those who are accepted by His favor, and not for their acts, and those who are rejected by His decree, and not for their sins.<sup>70</sup> He settles the accounts for the enemies and then punishes them. But He chides the friends in a mild way and then draws them close:

A people who,  
when they vanquished us,  
were generous  
in letting us go.<sup>71</sup>

[1:5] *You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help.*

<sup>67</sup> Basyūnī has a footnote saying there was something obscure after this, which may have been *and they love Him*, a reference to Qur'ānic verse 5:54. The MS K117, f. 2b ends with 'whom He loves'.

<sup>68</sup> Basyūnī has *sinna* and *khaṭra* here. The MS K117, f. 2b makes more sense with *sunayya* and *khaṭra*.

<sup>69</sup> In this sentence al-Qushayrī is playing with different verbal nouns that are all from the same root 'a-r-ḍ.

<sup>70</sup> This is the first of many passages in al-Qushayrī's commentary that reflect his Ash'arī views on predetermination.

<sup>71</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace these lines to another source (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 111).

Its meaning is ‘we worship You and we ask for help through You’, but beginning with the mention of the object of worship is better than beginning with the mention of the servant’s attribute,<sup>72</sup> which is his worship and seeking help.<sup>73</sup> This is a more eloquent wording and more pleasing to the ears. Worship is bringing the utmost humility in harmony (*muwāfaqa*) with the command, standing wherever the law stands, and asking for help in seeking the assistance of the Real.

Worship (‘*ibāda*) refers to the exertion of effort and strength, while asking for help (*isti‘āna*) indicates seeking to attract power and grace. So in worship the honor of the servant becomes manifest and in asking for help kindness comes to the servant. The finding of his honor is in worship and the granting of security from harm is in the asking for help. The outward aspect of worship is humbling oneself (*tadhallul*) but its inward truth is becoming powerful (*ta‘azzuz*) and beautiful (*tajammul*):

*When necks are brought low (dhallalat)  
in being brought near,  
between us, their glory (‘izz)  
is in their humility (dhull).<sup>74</sup>*

Its meaning is:

*As soon as you caused me  
to submit to dhāl and lām<sup>75</sup>  
You met me  
in ‘ayn and zā.<sup>76</sup>*

[Section] Worship is the promenade of the seekers (*qāṣidūn*), the recreation of the aspirants (*murīdūn*), the meadow of intimacy for the lovers (*muḥibbūn*) and the pasture of delight for the knowers (‘*ārīfūn*). Their eyes are cooled by [worship], their hearts find joy in it, and their

<sup>72</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 2b here: *ṣifat al-‘abd*.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Qushayrī is commenting here on the fact that the pronoun ‘You’ is placed before the verb, *īyyāka na‘budu wa īyyāka nasta‘īn* rather than *na‘buduka wa nasta‘īnuka*.

<sup>74</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes these lines to Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī (Muṣṭafā, no. 34, p. 99).

<sup>75</sup> The letters in the word *dhull*.

<sup>76</sup> The letters in the word ‘*izz*. Muṣṭafā provides what he calls the correct version of this verse from al-Qushayrī’s *Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Muṣṭafā no. 1, p. 122).



spirits have rest from it. [The Prophet] (ﷺ) alluded to this in saying, ‘Give us rest, O Bilāl’.<sup>77</sup> One created being said about another created being:

*O people, my blood revenge*

*belongs to my Asmā’*

*Anyone near and far*

*knows it.*<sup>78</sup>

*Do not call upon me*

*except by ‘O servant of her’*

*For that is the most truthful*

*of my names.*<sup>79</sup>

Asking for help is to alight in the environs of His generosity, to put your burden down in the courtyard of His liberality, and to submit your burden to the hand of His rule.<sup>80</sup> So you seek Him full of hope, taking large strides towards Him, hoping in Him with a powerful anticipation, having faith in His eternal generosity, trusting in what has already been chosen (*ikhtiyār sābiq*),<sup>81</sup> and clinging to the strong rope of His liberality.

#### [1:6] *Guide us to the straight path.*

Guidance (*hidāya*) is to direct (*irshād*) and its basic meaning is to influence someone’s inclinations. The one who is guided is one who is aware of the Real (ﷻ) and prefers His good pleasure and has faith in Him. The command in this verse is elided, for the meaning is ‘Say: Guide us’. The believers are already being rightly guided in the present moment, so the meaning is to petition for ongoing and ever increasing [guidance]. The **straight path** is the true path upon which are the people who declare God’s oneness. The meaning of **guide us** is ‘cause us to incline to You’, ‘take us as Yours’, ‘be our guide (*dalīl*) to You’,<sup>82</sup> ‘facilitate our

<sup>77</sup> Bilāl was appointed the caller to prayer (*mu’adhdhin*) by the Prophet Muḥammad. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Ṭabarānī, *Mu’jam al-kabīr*, 6:340 and Ibn Kathīr, *Al-tafsīr*, 5:406 among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>78</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 2b here: *ya ‘rifuhu al-ḥāḍir wa’l-nā’i*.

<sup>79</sup> Muṣṭafā states that these verses are mentioned in al-Qushayrī’s *Kitāb al-mirāj* without attribution. Slightly different versions appear in two other works cited by Muṣṭafā, attributed to Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Maghribī al-Zāhid in one (Muṣṭafā no. 1, p. 22). I located similar lines in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla*, only there the woman’s name is Zahrā’ (vol. 2, p.431).

<sup>80</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 2b text in this sentence because it seems to better reflect al-Qushayrī’s style and his love of metaphor, which is missing from the Basyūnī version.

<sup>81</sup> A repeated phrase in al-Qushayrī’s theology of predetermination.

<sup>82</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 3a in *‘alayka* over *‘alaynā* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

way to You’, ‘arouse our aspiration for You’<sup>83</sup> and ‘bring our concerns together through You’.

[Section] ‘Prevent our innermost selves from witnessing all others (*aghyār*). Show in our hearts the risings of lights (*anwār*). Keep our seeking of You from the blemish of traces or effects (*āthār*).<sup>84</sup> And cause us to rise from the way stations of studying and reasoning to the gathering together (*jam*’) on the plains of nearness and communion.’

[Section] ‘Take away our comfort with simulacra and outward appearances through the intimate kindnesses and secrets you share with us in finding communion and witnessing the sublime and beautiful.’

[Section] ‘Direct us to the Real so that we will not put our trust in the intermediaries of [our] deeds, and so that the dust of vain opinions and suppositions will not fall upon the face of professing divine unity’.

**Guide us to the straight path**, i.e., ‘remove from us the darkness of our states so that we may be illuminated by the lights of Your holiness from the shadows of our own seeking. And lift from us the shadow of our effort so that we may gain insight by the stars of Your liberality and find You through You’.

[Section] ‘**Guide us to the straight path** so that no associate from Satan’s insinuations and whisperings, and no friend from the inclinations and murmurings of the lower selves become our companions. Let not any stay in the familiar territories of blind following (*taqlīd*) keep us from communion. Do not let reliance on routine instruction come between us and insight. Do not let any harm from drunkenness or indulgence seduce us, nor any conjecture or habit, laziness or weak desire, or coveting of wealth or increase’.

[Section] **The straight path** is that to which the Book and the Sunna are a guide (*dalīl*), and there is no authority for innovation concerning it and to it no other way (*sabīl*). **The straight path** possesses a soundness to which the guideposts of divine unity (*dalā’il al-tawhīd*) bear witness and the testimonies of realization (*shawāhid al-taḥqīq*) pay heed. **The straight path** is that upon which the pious forefathers (*salaf*) of the community tread and of its rightness the guideposts of admonition speak. **The straight path** is that which separates the traveler (*sālik*) from his worldly fortunes (*ḥuḏūḏ*) and the seeker (*qāṣid*) from his rights

<sup>83</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 3a in *laka* over *lanā* as found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>84</sup> In other words, ‘keep us from looking to the traces or effects (*āthār*) of divine action in the world rather than to the Originator of these actions, the Real (*swt*)’. Note the rhyming pattern of *aghyār*, *anwār*, *āthār*.

(*ḥuqūq*). **The straight path** is that which brings its traveler to the courtyard of unity. It calls its follower to witness the trace of solicitude and liberality (*jūd*) so that he will not think it the result of [his own] endeavor (*majhūd*).<sup>85</sup>

[1:7] *the path of those whom You have favored,*

It means the way (*tarīq*) of those whom You have favored with guidance to the straight path and these are the friends (*awliyā*) and chosen ones (*aṣfiyā*). It is said it is the way of those whom You have annihilated from themselves and raised up through You for You. They do not stop along the way and the secrets of the divine ruse (*makr*) do not keep them from You. It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored with upholding Your rights (*ḥuqūq*) without being moved towards the seeking of their worldly fortunes (*ḥuḏūz*).

It is said it is the path of those whom You have purified from their [human] traces (*āthār*) so that they reach You through You.

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored to the point that they are wary of<sup>86</sup> the tricks of Satan and the errors of the lower selves and the imaginings of opinions and conjectures about arriving before the extinguishing of carnal human traces (*āthār al-bashariyya*).

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored with discernment and seeking help through You, and with declaring themselves free of power and strength, and with witnessing the felicity that has been already been determined for them, and with knowledge through the affirmation of Your unity of that which will come to pass causing happiness and harm.

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored with being mindful of refined behavior (*adab*)<sup>87</sup> at the times of service and being filled with the quality of awe (*hayba*).<sup>88</sup>

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored by causing them to be mindful in the good manners (*ādāb*) and precepts (*aḥkām*) of the law [even] under the sway of onslaughts of

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<sup>85</sup> It is very difficult to do justice to the eloquence of the Arabic in this paragraph. A few transliterations have been provided to give a small taste of al-Qushayrī's rhyming patterns.

<sup>86</sup> I'm following the MS K117, f. 3b text here, which has *taḥarrasū* instead of Basyūnī's *taḥarrarū*.

<sup>87</sup> The term 'refined behavior' is discussed in the 'Section on Refined Behavior' (*bāb al-adab*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 2, pgs. 558-564).

<sup>88</sup> The term 'awe' is discussed in 'Awe and Intimacy' (*al-hayba wa'l-uns*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 199-200).

realities (*bawādh al-ḥaqā'iq*),<sup>89</sup> so that they do not go beyond the limit of knowledge and do not violate any of the precepts of the law.

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored so that the suns of what they have come to know will not extinguish the lights of their scrupulousness (*wara'*)<sup>90</sup> and they will not neglect any of the precepts of the law.

It is said it is the path of those whom You have favored with servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*)<sup>91</sup> at the time of the manifestation of the authority of reality.

[1:7 cont'd] *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath, nor of those who are astray.*

***Those against whom there is wrath*** are those hit by the blows of withdrawn assistance (*hawājim al-khidhlān*) and overtaken by the afflictions of deprivation (*maṣā'ib al-ḥirmān*).<sup>92</sup> They suffer the attack of rejection (*saṭwa al-radd*) and are overwhelmed by the onslaughts of repulsion (*bawādh al-ṣadd*) and banishment.

It is said they are those afflicted by the ignominy of abasement (*hawān*) and the calamity of loss (*khusrān*) for they are occupied in the present moment in seeking worldly things. In truth it is a deception (*makr*),<sup>93</sup> and<sup>94</sup> they suppose that they are [standing] on something [58:18],<sup>95</sup> but the Real has a secret regarding their misery.

It is said they are those who were delighted by the fragrances of drawing near for a time but then the Real (s) exposed the remoteness of their situation.<sup>96</sup> Communion was exchanged for distance in them. They craved nearness but did not find the object of their desires. Those are the ones whose striving was in vain and whose thinking went wrong.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the term 'onslaughts' (*bawādh*) in both positive and negative ways. In this paragraph, the word is used to describe unexpected intuitions of realities. Three paragraphs later he uses it to describe unexpected unpleasant events. See '[Unexpected] raids and attacks' (*al-bawādh wa'l-hujūm*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 231).

<sup>90</sup> See the 'Section on Scrupulousness' (*bāb al-wara'*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 284-291).

<sup>91</sup> See the 'Section on Servanthood' (*'ubūdiyya*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 428-432).

<sup>92</sup> Note the rhyming patterns in this paragraph.

<sup>93</sup> Basyūnī has "misery" (*shaqā'*) but in parentheses, so he seems to have been guessing. The translation follows MS K117, f. 3b here with the word *makr*.

<sup>94</sup> The translation follows the word 'and' (*wa*) found in MS K117, f. 3b rather than 'since' (*idh*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>95</sup> I am grateful to Joseph Lumbard for pointing out to me that the phrase al-Qushayrī uses here is quoted from Qur'ānic verse 58:18.

<sup>96</sup> The translation follows the word *na'y* found in MS K117, f. 3b over the word *bāb* in Basyūnī's edition.

It is said ***not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath*** in [their] forgetting [His] granting of success (*tawfiq*) and [their] blocking the vision of [His] support (*ta'yīd*). ***Nor of those who have gone astray*** from witnessing the choice already made (*sābiq al-ikhtiyār*) and the flow of changing events and God's decrees (*al-taṣārīf wa'l-aqdār*).

It is said ***not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath*** in their neglecting the good manners of service and their carelessness in performing the obligations of obedience.

It is said ***not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath***: they are those who have been cut off in the deserts of absence. Anxieties have scattered them in the torrents of ways of conjecturing.

[Section] The servant says 'Amen' when reciting this sura and this is recommended practice (*sunna*). Its meaning is 'O Lord, I act. Do Thou respond'. It is as if one calls out in saying this for the success granted [by God] for actions (*al-tawfiq li'l-'amāl*) and the realization of hopes (*al-tahqīq li'l-āmāl*). His feet are planted on the plains of need and he whispers to the presence of liberality by the tongue of supplication and implores the presence of generosity by absolving himself of power, energy, strength and ability. And indeed the most powerful instrument for the one in need is to cling unceasingly to seeking assistance in becoming sincere in one's cry for help.

## *Sūrat al-Baqara*

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

The word *ism* ('name') is derived from *sumūw* ('loftiness') and *sima* ('sign or characteristic'). Therefore the way of one who practices remembrance of this Name is to be characterized (*yattasimu*)<sup>97</sup> outwardly by different types of intense efforts (*mujāhadāt*) and to be elevated (*yasmū*)<sup>98</sup> [inwardly] through aspiration to the places of witnessings (*mushāhadāt*). As for those who are not characterized by [these] modes of behavior (*mu'āmalāt*) outwardly and have lost the loftiness of aspiration for intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*) in the inner secrets of their hearts, one will not find the subtleties of remembrance in their speaking (*qāla*) or the generous gifts of nearness in their purest state (*ḥāla*).

[Section] The meaning of *Allāh* ('God') is the One who possesses Divinity (*ilāhiyya*) and Divinity lays claim to the attributes of Majesty (*jalāl*). The meaning of *bismillah* ('**In the Name of God**') is 'in the Name of the One Who is unique in strength and power'. **The Compassionate, the Merciful** is the One Who is the only One in initiating grace and help. Hearing the Divinity [in the phrase **In the Name of God**] causes awe and eradication (*iṣṭilām*) while hearing **the Compassionate** causes nearness and reverence (*ikrām*). Everyone whom the Real (s) treats with kindness upon hearing this verse is tossed between wakefulness (*ṣaḥw*) and effacement (*maḥw*), subsistence (*baqā*) and annihilation (*fanā*).<sup>99</sup> When He unveils the attribute of Divinity to such a one, He causes him to witness His Majesty and his state is effacement. When He unveils the attribute of Compassion to him, He causes him to witness His Beauty and his state is wakefulness:

*I disappear when I witness You,*

*then become alive again.*

*How often have I come to life before You*

*and how often have I passed away.*<sup>100</sup>

[2:1] *Alif lām mīm.*

<sup>97</sup> A verb derived from the same root *w-s-m* as *sima*.

<sup>98</sup> A verb derived from the same root *s-m-w* as *sumūw*.

<sup>99</sup> These four terms are explained in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* in the sections on 'Wakefulness and Drunkenness' (*al-ṣaḥw wa'l-sukr*), 'Effacement and Affirmation' (*al-maḥw wa'l-ithbāt*) and 'Annihilation and Subsistence' (*al-fanā wa'l-baqā*), (vol.1, pp. 217-9, 222-3, 211-3).

<sup>100</sup> This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

According to some people, these isolated letters at the beginning of the sura are among the ambiguous [verses], the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of which is known only to God.<sup>101</sup> They say every book has a mystery and the mystery of God in the Qur'ān is these isolated letters.

According to other people they are acronyms for His Names: the *alif* is from the Name 'Allah', the *lām* indicates His Name *al-laṭīf* ('the Subtle'), and the *mīm* indicates His Names *al-majīd* ('the Glorious') and *al-malik* ('the King').

It is said God made an oath by means of these letters, an honor they hold because they are the basic elements of His Names and His Speech.

It is said that they are the names of suras [of the Qur'ān].

It is said that the *alif* indicates the Name Allāh, the *lām* indicates the name *Jibrīl* (Gabriel), and the *mīm* indicates the name Muḥammad (ṣ), since this Book descended from God upon the tongue of Gabriel to Muḥammad (ṣ).

Among the [Arabic] letters, *alif* is independent (*infaradat*) in its form because it does not connect to other letters in writing; all but a few of the letters connect.<sup>102</sup> By contemplating this quality, the servant becomes aware of the need of all creation for Him and His Self-sufficiency from all.

It is said that the sincere servant remembers from the status of the *alif* the absolute freedom of the Real (*swt*) from being particularized by place. All of the letters have a place in the throat, the lip or the tongue, etc., for articulation, except *alif*. It is His 'His-ness' (*huwiya*)<sup>103</sup> without being ascribed to any place.

It is said the allusion in [the *alif*] is to the servant's standing alone (*infirād*)<sup>104</sup> for God (*swt*) so that he will be like the *alif* which is not connected to any letter, and will not abandon the state of standing straight and upright before Him.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> A reference to Qur'ānic verse 3:7.

<sup>102</sup> In Arabic script, the *alif* is one of six letters (out of a total of twenty-eight) that do not connect to the letter after them in a word.

<sup>103</sup> *Huwiya*, from *huwa* can also be translated as 'essence'.

<sup>104</sup> *Infirād* is the verbal noun for the verb *infarada*, the word al-Qushayrī uses several times in this section to describe the characteristics of the letter *alif*.

<sup>105</sup> Literally, 'between His Hands' (*bayna yadihi*).

It is said that at His address *alif*, the servant is called in his innermost self to withdraw (*infirād*) the heart to God Most High. At His address *lām*, he is asked to yield (*līn*) to Him in considering His due. Upon hearing the *mīm* he is asked to conform (*muwāfaqa*) to His command regarding that which has been entrusted to him.

It is said that each letter has a specific form and the *alif* is alone (*infaradat*) in its being a vertical line, set apart from connection with other letters like it, so He assigned the front part of the Book for it. This is an allusion to the fact that anyone who has renounced the connection with likenesses and distractions attains the good fortune of the sublime rank and wins the ultimate degree. He has become worthy to speak with the detached letters (*al-ḥurūf al-munfarida*) which are not combined, following the custom of lovers (*sunnat al-aḥbāb*) in veiling the state and hiding the affair from strangers to the story. Their poet said:

*I said to her, 'stop'.*

*She said 'qāf'.<sup>106</sup>*

[The poet] did not say 'She stopped' (*waqaftu*) so that no onlooker would see, nor did he [have her] say, 'I will not stop' (*lā aqif*) in tending to the heart of the beloved, but rather, 'She said "qāf"'.<sup>107</sup>

It is said that there are many expressions (*'ibārāt*) for ordinary people (*'umūm*) and [many] symbols (*rumūz*) and allusions (*ishārāt*) for the elect (*khuṣūṣ*). He made Moses hear His words in a thousand (*alf*) places while He said to our Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), '*Alif...*' and [Muḥammad] said, '*I was given the all-comprehensive words (jawāmi' al-kalim) and then the speech (kalām) was shortened for me*'.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Muṣṭafā states that Abū Ishāq al-Zujjāj recited this verse to show that Arabs used single letters to indicate words. In this case, the letter *qāf* indicates the word *aqif*, which means 'I stop' (Muṣṭafā, no.1, p.80). It could also be understood as indicating *waqaftu* ('I stopped'). The second line of this verse appears in the Basyūnī text but not in MS K117, f. 4a. Following the latter, I have omitted it since it obscures al-Qushayrī's point.

<sup>107</sup> In other words, the poet has her speak in the 'code' of lovers that allows for a hidden expression of intimacy.

<sup>108</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives Muslim, *Al-Masājīd*, 7:8 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 2:250, 2:314, 2:442, 2:501, among other sources for this *ḥadīth*. . Lane quotes authorities who understand the *ḥadīth* as 'I have had communicated to me the Qur'ān, in which many meanings are comprised in a few words' (Lane, vol.1, p. 458). Al-Qushayrī quotes this *ḥadīth* again in his commentary on 2:50 below.



Someone said: My master said to me, ‘What is this sickness?’ I said, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘*Lām alif*’.<sup>109</sup>

[2:2] *That Book, in it there is no doubt.*

It is said *that Book* means ‘this Book’.<sup>110</sup>

[On the other hand] it is said [*that Book*] is an allusion to what preceded its revelation in the [divine] Speech.

It is [also] said [that it means] ‘*that Book* whose revelation I promised to you on the Day of the Covenant’.

*In it there is no doubt* for this is the time of its revelation. It is said: ‘*that Book* within which I prescribed mercy on Myself for your community – there is no uncertainty [regarding that] for it has been verified by what I have said’.

It is said [*that Book* is] the Book that is My predetermination (*sābiq ḥukmī*) and My eternal decree (*qadīm qaḍā’ī*), because in it there is no doubt regarding those for whom I have determined happiness or have sealed with wretchedness.<sup>111</sup>

It is said [it means]: ‘My determination is what I have said: there is no uncertainty in the fact that My mercy precedes My wrath.’

It is said [it is] an allusion to the faith, knowledge, love and goodness that is written in the hearts of His friends. Surely the Book of the lovers is something cherished by the lovers, especially when deprived of meeting. In the Book of the lovers, there is their consolation and intimacy, their healing and refreshment. With respect to this, they recite:

*Your writing is all around me,*

*it doesn’t leave my bed*

*There is healing in it for that*

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<sup>109</sup> *Lām alif* spells the word *lā* in Arabic, which means ‘no’. Muṣṭafā does not give another source for this line.

<sup>110</sup> A common interpretation understands the word ‘that’ (*dhālika*) in this Qur’ānic verse as meaning ‘this’ (*hādhā*).

<sup>111</sup> For the concept of God’s ‘sealing’, see Qur’ānic verses 2:7, 6:46, 42:24, and 45:23.

*which I am concealing.*<sup>112</sup>

They also recite:

*The book brought  
what is most cooling to our eyes,  
a healing for hearts;  
thereby the utmost limits of desires are granted.*

*People divided happiness  
into portions  
amongst themselves.*

*The most fortunate of them was I.*<sup>113</sup>

[2:2 cont'd] *A guidance for the God-fearing.*

i.e., an explanation and proof, a light and a highway, for those whom the Real (swt) has protected from the darknesses of ignorance, and given insight with the lights of the intellect, and selected for the realities of connecting (*waṣl*). This Book for the friends (*awliyā'*) is a healing (*shifā'*) and for the enemies (*a'dā'*) a blindness and affliction (*balā'*). The one who is God-fearing (*muttaqin*) is one who fears (*ittaqā*) looking to his own God-fearing (*taqwā*); he does not rely on it nor does he consider that he can be saved except through the grace of his Protector.

[2:3] *Who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer*

The true meaning of belief (*imān*) is affirmation (*taṣdīq*) and then actualization (*taḥqiq*), both of which are brought about by God's granting of success (*tawfīq*). The affirmation is in the

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<sup>112</sup> Muṣṭafā points out that this verse is also quoted without attribution in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (Muṣṭafā no. 2, p. 103). He adds an additional line but doesn't explain where it's from; the line does not appear in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 276).

<sup>113</sup> Muṣṭafā traces a slightly different version of these verses to Abū Muḥammad al-Khāzin (Muṣṭafā no. 3, p. 111).

contract (‘*aqd*)<sup>114</sup> and actualization is through the exertion of effort (*jahd*) in preserving the covenant (‘*ahd*) and observing the limit (*hadd*). The believers are those who affirm (*ṣaddaqū*) their commitment (*i‘tiqād*) and then are sincere (*ṣadaqū*) in their effort (*ijtihād*).

As for the Unseen, what the servant knows of it is limited to what is necessary. The servant understands each religious matter by a kind of reasoning (*istidlāl*), a mode of reflective consideration (*fīkr*), and testimonial witness (*istishhād*), so the belief is invisible (*ghaybī*) within it. The Lord (*swt*) is unseen (*ghayb*) and what the Real speaks about with regards to the gathering and the resurrection, the reward and the place of return, and the reckoning and punishment, is unseen.

It is said that only someone who has the lamp of the Unseen with him believes. Those who are supported by the demonstrative proof of intellects believe through the evidence of knowledge and the sign of certitude. The veracity of reasoning brings them to the courtyards of insight, and what is correct in testimonial witness carries them to the elevated observation points of stillness. Their faith in the Unseen comes through the types of knowledge (‘*ulūm*) they possess, crowding out the causes of doubt. [Others] receive instruction (*ta‘rīf*) through curtains of lights He has lowered down over them. Through the glimmers of perspicuity (*bayān*), He has freed them from the need for any thought and reflection, any seeking of pure intuitions (*khawāṭir dhakiyya*) or rejection of ignoble urgings (*dawā‘in radiyya*).<sup>115</sup> The suns of their innermost selves rise and they no longer have any need for the lamps of their reasoning. Regarding this they have recited:

*From your face my night has become*

*the sun of the bright morning.*

*The darkness is elsewhere,*

*in the air.*

*People are in*

*the twilight of darkness.*

*While we, from your face,*

<sup>114</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 4b and Y101, f. 6b here with ‘*aqd*, rather than the word ‘intellect’ (‘*aql*) found in the Basyūnī edition. The word ‘*aqd* is more consistent with al-Qushayrī’s use of rhyme and wordplay.

<sup>115</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 4b here.

*are in the bright morning light.*<sup>116</sup>

They also recite:

*The sun of the one who loves you*

*has appeared at night.*

*It has become illuminated*

*since she*<sup>117</sup> *does not set.*

*The sun of day*

*sets at night,*

*while the sun of hearts*

*never disappears.*<sup>118</sup>

Anyone who believes in the Unseen through witnessing the Unseen (*ghayb*) becomes absent (*ghābā*) in witnessing it. He became an absent one who is himself unseen (*fa-ṣāra ghayban yaghīb*).

As for maintaining prayer, it is maintaining its pillars and practices, and then absenting oneself (*ghayba*) from witnessing them, looking instead to the One to Whom prayer is offered. Thus one will preserve the precepts of the command for Him in what is performed for Him from Him, effaced from regarding [the act of prayer]. Souls such as this face the *qibla* with their hearts immersed in the realities of communion:

*I see myself, when praying,*

*turning my face toward her*

*even though the direction of prayer*

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<sup>116</sup> I am following the version of these lines found in the MS K117, f. 4b: *laylī min wajhiki shams al-ḍuḥā wa-innamā 'l-ẓulma fī 'l-jaww al-nās fī 'l-ṣadafa min laylihim wa-naḥnu min wahjiki fī 'l-ḍaw'.* Muṣṭafā notes that al-Qushayrī cites this passage elsewhere in his *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* and his *Risāla*. (Muṣṭafā no. 6, p. 59). The version of the poem in the 'Section on Advice for Aspirants' (*bāb al-waṣiyya li'l-murīdīn*) in the *Risāla* is slightly different than the one here (vol. 2, p. 732).

<sup>117</sup> The word 'sun' (*shams*) is grammatically feminine in Arabic.

<sup>118</sup> Muṣṭafā traces these lines to al-Ḥallāj's *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 27).

*is the other way.*

*I pray but don't know whether*

*I have completed*

*the two [rakats] of the morning prayer*

*or eight.*<sup>119</sup>

Ordinary people strive, when beginning to pray, to direct their hearts back to the awareness of what they are performing obligatorily, yet they do not turn back from the torrents of forgetfulness. The elect, on the other hand, direct their hearts back to the awareness of what they are performing, yet they do not turn back from the realities of communion. What a difference between one who attends to the precepts of the law but is absent in the familiar territories of his forgetfulness, and the one who turns back to the precepts of the law but is absent in the realities of communion.

**[2:3 cont'd] *and of what We have provided them expend***

‘Provision’ (*rizq*) is that from which mankind derives benefit. In the *tafsīr* tradition it says that they expend their wealth either through supererogatory acts or obligatory acts, according to the details of [juridical] knowledge. However, the allusion [in the verse] explains that they do not hold back anything from God (*swt*) of that which has been made easy for them. They expend their lower selves in the good manners of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*) and they expend their hearts in the perpetual witnessing of lordship (*rubūbiyya*). The expending of the followers of Shari‘a is with respect to wealth (*amwāl*) and the expending of the masters of reality is with respect to states (*aḥwāl*). [The followers of the Shari‘a] are those for whom the 2.5% [alms]<sup>120</sup> is sufficient, with one’s entire wealth taken into account [in determining] the minimum amount, according to the customary practice. As for the people of realities, if they grant even a moment of the entirety of their states to themselves and their own worldly fortunes, the Resurrection looms before them.

[Section] The ascetics (*zāhidūn*) expend the pursuit of their own whim (*hawā*) on the path, for they prefer the good pleasure of God over their own desires. The worshippers (*‘ābidūn*) expend their ability and power in the way of God, constantly holding to their consciousness of

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<sup>119</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes a slightly different version of these lines to Majnūn in his *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 122).

<sup>120</sup> The obligatory amount of *zakāt*.

God (*taqwā*),<sup>121</sup> privately and publicly. The seekers (*murīdūn*) expend in His way what distracts them from remembering their Protector (*mawlā*), so they do not pay any attention to anything in their present world or their world to come. The knowers (‘*ārifūn*’) expend in the way of God everything other than their Protector (*mawlā*), so the Real (s) draws them near and gives them refuge and by virtue of being alone with Him, He suffices<sup>122</sup> for them.

[Section] The rich expend from their blessings for the sake of what is to come while the poor (*fuqarā’*)<sup>123</sup> expend from their aspirations for the sake of turning [to God]. It is said that [the instruments of] the servant are his heart, his body and his possessions. Thus by their faith in the Unseen, they [serve] through their hearts, by their praying they [serve] through their lower selves, and by their expending they [serve] through their possessions, so that they become worthy of the special favors (*khaṣā’iṣ*) of drawing near to that which they serve and worship. When they exist entirely through<sup>124</sup> His Truth, they become deserving of the perfection of intimate friendship (*khuṣūṣiyya*).

**[2:4] and who believe in what has been revealed to you; and what was revealed before you; and of the Hereafter, they are certain.**

Their belief in the Unseen necessarily requires their belief in the Qur’ān and in what God has revealed in the books before the Qur’ān, but He repeats the mention of belief here for the purposes of specification and corroboration. The affirmation (*taṣdīq*) of the intermediary (s)<sup>125</sup> in some of what he has communicated makes the affirmation of him obligatory in all that he has communicated, since the evidence of his sincerity bears witness generally without any restriction. They have certainty in the Hereafter because they have witnessed the Unseen: When the Messenger of God (s) asked Ḥāritha, ‘How is your state?’ He said, ‘I have become one who submits to God in truth and it is as if I were with the people of the Garden exchanging visits, and as if I were with the people of the Fire clamoring to one another, and as if I were with the throne of my Lord in plain sight. The Messenger of God (s) said, ‘You have it right, so keep to it’.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>121</sup> The word ‘consciousness of God’, which can also be translated as ‘God-fearing’ (*taqwā*), follows the MSS K117, f. 5a and Y101, f. 7a rather than the word *nufūs* found in the Basyūnī edition because it makes more sense in the context and matches the rhyming pattern of *hawā*, *taqwā*, and *mawlā*.

<sup>122</sup> The translation here follows the phrases ‘He gives them refuge (*āwā*)’ and ‘He suffices (*kafā*)’ from MS K117, f. 5a.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the word ‘the poor’ (*fuqarā’*) to mean both the indigent and those who have attained the spiritual station of poverty. See ‘Section on Poverty’ (*bāb al-faqr*) in his *Risāla* (vol.2, pp. 536-549).

<sup>124</sup> The Basyūnī edition has ‘for the sake of (*li*)’, while the MSS K117, f. 5a and Y101, f. 7a have ‘through (*bi*)’, which is the preposition used throughout the sentence, i.e., ‘they exist through...’.

<sup>125</sup> i.e., Muḥammad.

<sup>126</sup> Basyūnī mentions in a footnote that al-Ṭabarānī’s *Mu’jam al-kabīr* classifies this *ḥadīth* as having a weak chain of transmission (*isnād*). ‘Abd al-Raḥmān cites a few sources for the *ḥadīth*, including al-‘Uqaylī’s *Kitāb al-ḍu‘afā’ al-kabīr*, 4:455. Al-Qushayrī cites a shorter and slightly different version of this *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:50 below.

‘Āmir b. ‘Abd al-Qays<sup>127</sup> said, ‘If the veil were to be lifted, it would not increase my certainty’. The real meaning of certainty is to rid yourself of indecisive guessing and to stay far away from loose conjecturing.

**[2:5] *Those are upon guidance from their Lord; those are the ones that will prosper***

It means ‘[those are] in possession of clear evidence, certainty, unveiling and realization from their Lord’. He discloses Himself to their hearts first by His signs, then by His attributes, and then by His reality and Essence.

Some people ***are upon guidance from their Lord*** by means of rational proofs (*dalā’il al-‘uqūl*). They apply [these proofs]<sup>128</sup> properly and therefore attain truths of different types of knowledge (*ḥaqā’iq al-‘ulūm*). Other people possess insight (*baṣīra*) into the courtesies of drawing near, so that through witnessing the mercy and generosity [of God] they attain the perspicuity (*bayān*) of certainty. The truth appears to others in their innermost selves so that they witness the reality of the eternally sought and impenetrable (*ṣamadiyya*), and they attain to the source of the faculty of insight by virtue of mystical knowledge (*‘irfān*).

***Those are the ones that will prosper***: Prosperity is to attain what is wanted and win what is sought. The folk<sup>129</sup> have attained subsistence (*baqā’*) at the place<sup>130</sup> of meeting and have achieved victory in subduing the enemies that are the clamor of random thoughts (*hawājis*) in the lower self. Then the ideas (*khawāṭir*)<sup>131</sup> that come to hearts disappear and they stand by the Real for the Real without the intermediary of an intellect (*‘aql*) or recourse to memory (*dhikr*) or thought (*fikr*).

**[2:6] *As for the disbelievers, alike it is for them whether you have warned them or have not warned them, they do not believe.***

<sup>127</sup> This is one of the rare places in *Laṭā’if al-Ishārāt* where al-Qushayrī mentions an individual by name. The same quote appears in the ‘Section on Certainty’ (*bāb al-yaqīn*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 393).

<sup>128</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 51a and Y101, f. 7a, which have the pronoun *hā* (referring to the proofs), rather than the Basyūnī edition which has the dual pronoun *humā*.

<sup>129</sup> Here al-Qushayrī seems to be using the word ‘folk’ (*al-qawm*) to refer to Sufis, as he does in many places in his *Risāla*.

<sup>130</sup> The ‘place’ (*mashad*) here is the ‘place of assembly’. Al-Qushayrī may also have in mind the other meaning of this word, which is the ‘place where a martyr dies’, in this case meaning the place where the individual self is annihilated (*fanā’*).

<sup>131</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses *khawāṭir* as a general term for thoughts and inspirations that come from both reliable and unreliable sources. See his section on ‘Thoughts (*al-khawāṭir*)’ in the *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 242-3).

Those who are veiled by the covering of their own qualities are kept from witnessing His truth. The allusion here is that both are the same to them – the words of one who tries to lead them to the Real (*ḥaqq*) or the words of one who aids them in seeking to attract worldly fortune (*ḥazz*). Nay, they are more inclined to the calls to heedlessness and prefer to pay attention to them. How could they not, when they are marked with the branding of separation, locked in the prison of absence, and barred from the place of nearness. None of them will attain faith (*īmān*) because there is no granting of security (*amān*) for them from the Real. Because they have not been granted security (*lam yu'manū*) they do not believe (*lam yu'minū*). A determination God has already made is unalterable and a word from Him is final. (God's) power cannot be opposed. Fearsome attacks will surprise those who contest the Real in the matter and the decree will catch them unawares.

It is said that the disbeliever does not desist from his straying because of the misery that is already his. Likewise the one who is bound by the shackles of his lower self is veiled from witnessing His Unseen and His Reality, for he cannot see the right way or pursue the right course. It is said that for the one who remains in the darkneses of his foolishness, equal to him are the advice of sound guides and the fictions of those who speak falsely, for God has removed from his states the blessings of being able to judge between two things. He does not come with an ear to acceptance and pays little attention to the caller to right conduct. As it is said:

*My sincere advice (naṣīḥatī)*

*is the concern of sincere (naṣūḥ).*

*The disobedience of the sincere*

*is My concern.*<sup>132</sup>

It is also said that whoever has strayed from bearing witness to the favors that have been allotted him imagines that the matter comes from what he does and doesn't do.<sup>133</sup> He relies on his own actions and is blind to witnessing His gifts.

***[2:7] God has set a seal on their hearts, and on their hearing; and on their eyes is a covering; and for them will be a mighty chastisement.***

The seal on something prevents anything from entering it or coming out. Similarly, the Real (s) has determined that the ignorance and error in the hearts of His enemies will not be removed, nor will any insight or guidance enter into them. There is a covering of forsakenness

<sup>132</sup> Muṣṭafā states he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 42).

<sup>133</sup> Literally, his movements (*ḥarakāt*) and states of rest (*sakanāt*).



over the hearing of their hearts. The faculties of hearing have been blocked from receiving the speech of the Real with respect to belief, so the whisperings of Satan and the murmurings (*hawājīs*) of their lower selves distract [the heart] from listening to the intuitions (*khawāṭir*) that come from the Real. As for the elect, the intuitions that come from different kinds of knowledge (*‘ulūm*)<sup>134</sup> and preoccupation with the results to questions in their hearts distract their hearts from the secrets of the Real coming to them without intermediary. That is only for the elect of the elect. For this reason the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, ‘**There have been inspired men (*muḥaddathūn*) in communities and if there is any in my community, it is ‘Umar**’.<sup>135</sup> This inspired one is singled out from the elect just as the possessor of different types of knowledge is singled out from among ordinary people. There is a covering over the eyes of outsiders so they will not see either by the ‘sight’ (*baṣar*) of different kinds of knowledge or by the insight (*baṣīra*) of realities. **And for them will be a mighty chastisement** because of their supposing that they have something and their forgetfulness of what they have been given in tribulation in the present and the end, which is their separation (*furqa*) in the here and now, and their burning (*ḥurqa*) in what is to come.

**[2:8] And some people there are who say, ‘We believe in God and the Last Day’; but they are not believers.**

They stayed firm in their hypocrisy and persisted in deceiving the Muslims, so God tore off their veils by His saying ‘**but they are not believers**’. Thus it is said:

*Whoever adorns himself with something  
other than what he has inside,  
the test exposes  
what he is pretending.*<sup>136</sup>

When their words were stripped of their meanings, the harm they received from them was greater than the benefit they imagined in them, for God Most High said, ‘*Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the Fire*’ [4:145] and if it were not for their hypocrisy, their punishment would not have been increased.

It is said that when they lacked sincerity in their states, sincere words were of no benefit to them. God Most High said, ‘*God bears witness that the hypocrites truly are liars*’ [63:1]

<sup>134</sup> Al-Qushayrī means legalistic or intellectual types of knowledge here.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Zabīdī’s *Iṭḥāf al-sādāt* ‘l-muttaqīn, 7:259, among other sources for this ḥadīth.

<sup>136</sup> Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Abū ‘Amr b. al-‘Alā’ (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 120).

while they used to say, ‘We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God’. In a similar way, the one who publicizes from himself what he has not yet realized will immediately be exposed before the masters of realization. It has been said:

*O you who claim*

*love for Sulaymā*

*You have nothing from her,*

*not even nail clippings.*

*You are only like a wāw<sup>137</sup>*

*in love for her*

*attached in spelling*

*in the wrong place to ‘Amr.<sup>138</sup>*

**[2:9] *They would deceive God and the believers; and only themselves they deceive; and they are not aware.***

The harm of their deception and the punishment for it comes back to themselves, so it is as if they deceived themselves in actuality, for they but treated their own value lightly and belittled themselves. No one suffered the harm of their actions but themselves and they cut off their own lifeblood. When there is one who knows the true nature of things, the one who desires to deceive him only deceives himself.

The allusion in this verse is to the one who has forgotten His prior kindness. He says, ‘mine, through me, from me and I’,<sup>139</sup> slandering in his delusion and conjecture [what should be] ‘Yours, through You, from You, and You’. This delusion is the most difficult of punishments because he sees a mirage (*sarāb*) and thinks it is drink (*sharāb*) until he comes to it and finds it to be nothing, and he finds God there, Who pays him his account in full [24:39].

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<sup>137</sup> A letter of the Arabic alphabet.

<sup>138</sup> The letter *wāw* is added in spelling to the name ‘Amr to distinguish it from the name ‘Umar, but it is not pronounced. Muṣṭafā traces these lines to Abū Nuwās’s *Diwān* (no.7, p.59).

<sup>139</sup> As Basyūnī points out in a footnote, this sentence echoes one in the ‘Section on unity (*bāb al-tawḥīd*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, p. 587).

[2:10] *In their hearts is a sickness; and God has increased their sickness; and there awaits them a painful chastisement because they used to lie.*

In the hearts of the hypocrites is the sickness of making partners [with God] (*shirk*)<sup>140</sup> and God increases their sickness in their imagining that they have been saved by deceiving the Muslims. The pain of their grievous punishment will reach them in the end. The allusion pertains to whoever has confused his ultimate objective (*qaṣd*) with his worldly concerns (*haẓẓ*) and mixed his spiritual desire (*irāda*) with his whims (*hawā*), taking one step forward with spiritual desire and one step backward with worldly concerns and following the lower self. He is neither a sincere seeker (*murīd*) nor permanently neglectful.<sup>141</sup> If the hypocrites had been sincere in their beliefs, they would have been safe from the punishment in the Hereafter just as they were safe from paying the *jizya* tax and the like in this world in the manner of polytheists and dhimmis.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, if the seeker (*murīd*) had been sincere in his spiritual desire, he would have reached out in his heart to the realities of communion and the blessings of sincerity would have reached him in attaining what he desired. But his state is as it has been said:

*We have not been firm*

*but justice will be firm with us without bending.*

*If we had been sincere (khalaṣnā),*

*we would have been saved (takhallaṣnā) from tribulation.*<sup>143</sup>

Anyone whose worship has become weak has a barrier between him and the degrees of the Gardens (*darajāt al-jannāt*). Anyone whose spiritual desire has become weak has a barrier between him and the intimate communications of nearness and whispered confidences (*muwāṣalāt al-qurb wa'l-munājāt*). As for those who rely on this world and follow whims, their reliance on the abode of illusion is an illness of their hearts. The increase in their disease will be as the increase in their greed. The more they find something from [this world], the more their greed multiplies for what they have not found, hastening the punishment for them.

Therefore, among the immediate punishments for them is the scattering of their concerns, and then their lives becoming troublesome. They are kept by [these punishments] from their Protector (*mawlā*). There will be no enjoyment for them nor rest in what they have preferred

<sup>140</sup> The MS K117, f. 5b has the word 'doubt' (*shakk*) here rather than *shirk*, which is the word found in the Basyūnī edition and MS Y101, f. 8a.

<sup>141</sup> The Basyūnī edition has the word 'discerning' ( *āqil*) here, but the word *ghāfil* from the MS K117, f. 5b makes more sense in the context.

<sup>142</sup> Dhimmis refer to peoples of other revealed religions who were given a protected status provided they accepted the sovereignty of Muslim rule and paid the *jizya* tax.

<sup>143</sup> This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

in following their own whims. This is the requital for anyone who abandons the companionship of his Protector. It is said regarding this:

*She changed and we changed.*

*Alas to anyone who*

*has sought but did not find a*

*replacement to make him forget.*<sup>144</sup>

The allusion in [the words] ***the painful chastisement because they used to lie*** is to the grief on the Day of Unveiling when they see how those like them who were sincere have arrived (*waṣālū*) and they see themselves and how they have lost (*khasirū*) .

[2:11-12] ***When it is said to them, ‘Do not corruption in the land’, they say, ‘We are only putting things right’. \* Truly, they are the agents of corruption, but they perceive not.***

The allusion in it is to the fact that when thoughts of warning came secretly to their hearts, calling them to right conduct, they followed self-indulgent interpretation (*rukhaṣ al-ta’wīl*) and deceived themselves about that which bore witness to the hardness of their hearts. When they denied the proof of the Real in the thoughts that came to their hearts, God took away the blessing from their states and gave them in its place a deaf ear to the Real. Their affliction is in their resistance to the path (*ṭarīqa*) and their loss of belief in it.

Just as an apostate is a more intense enemy to Muslims, so the one who returns from spiritual desire (*irāda*) to the world and ordinary custom is the worst of people in rejecting this path, and the most distant from its followers. As the proverb goes, ‘Anyone who looses their stored grain to fire wishes the same for others’. According to the sincere among those [on the path], the help of those who have deserted the way of spiritual desire is not to be accepted, just as the Messenger (ṣ) did not accept the almsgiving (*zakāt*) of Tha‘laba.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Muṣṭafā corrects the problems he notes in this verse through reference to a very similar verse attributed to al-Mustazhir bi-’llāh: *tabaddalū wa-tabaddalnā wa-akhsarnā man ibtaghā badalan minnā fa-lam yajid* (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 47). He does not mention, however, that al-Mustazhir was born a few years after al-Qushayrī’s death in 465/1075. Al-Qushayrī cites this verse again in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:116.

<sup>145</sup> The reference is to Tha‘laba b. Ḥāṭib al-Anṣārī al-Awsī. The story can be found in *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* in the commentary on 9:75-77 at <http://al-tafsir.com> (translation by Feras Hamza). He was a man who asked the Prophet to pray on his behalf for wealth, which he promised he would use to help those in need. The Prophet prayed for him and he became wealthy but he reneged on his promise. Some time later, he came to Muḥammad and wanted to pay the alms tax (*zakāt*) but the Prophet said

It is said the exposure of those who lie is sufficient, by saying to such a one's face, 'You have lied'. When they said, '***We are only putting things right***', the Real (s) showed them to be liars and He said, '***Truly, they are the agents of corruption, but they perceive not***', meaning 'We are aware of them and have exposed them'.

[2:13] ***When it is said to them, 'Believe as the people believe', they say, 'Shall we believe as fools believe?' Truly, they are the foolish ones, but they know not.***

The allusion in it is to the hypocrites who, when they were called to the Real, described the Muslims as foolish. Similarly, when the wealthy are commanded to renounce this world, they describe the people of right conduct as lazy and weak. They say the poor (*fuqarā'*) have nothing because they have no wealth, no status, no comfort and no livelihood. In truth, they are the poor and they are the possessors of tribulation. They have fallen into ignominy out of fear of ignominy, and struggled with abasement out of fear of abasement. They have constructed castles (*quṣūr*) but have lived in tombs (*qubūr*). They have adorned the cradle (*mahd*) but have been wrapped in the grave (*lahd*). They have galloped in the fields of heedlessness (*ghafla*) but have stumbled in the wadis of grief (*ḥasra*). Soon they will come to know but at that time their knowledge will not benefit them. Nothing will be of use to them.

*When the dust clears*

*you will see*

*whether a horse or a donkey*

*is beneath you.*<sup>146</sup>

[2:14-15] ***When they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe'; but when they go apart to their devils they say, 'We are with you; we were only mocking'. \* God [Himself] mocks them, leaving them in their insolence, bewildered.***

The hypocrites wanted to combine their relations with disbelievers with their companionship with Muslims, so when they appeared before Muslims they said, '***We are with you***' and when they were alone with those like them among the disbelievers, they voiced their loyalty to them. They wanted to combine the two situations but they were excluded from both. God Most High said, '*Wavering, all the time – not to these, neither to those*' [4:143]. Similarly, anyone who wants to combine the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*) and what he has from the

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that God had forbidden him to accept it from him, whereupon he began to throw earth on his head in remorse.

<sup>146</sup> Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 59).

people of habit (*ahl al- 'āda*),<sup>147</sup> [should know that] these cannot go together since two opposites cannot be combined. 'The servant who has contracted with his master to be freed is still a servant to the last dirham'. When night draws nigh, day slips away. Anyone who has a hodgepodge (*khalīṭ*) in every corner (*nāḥiyya*) and a heart bound (*rabīṭ*) in every nook (*zāwiyya*) is headed for disaster. First one group and then another take turns dwelling in his heart, so that it is forever ruined.<sup>148</sup> There is no pleasure for him in life nor does he possess any provision<sup>149</sup> from his heart in truth. The one who spoke for them said:

*I see you as someone left over*

*from the people of Moses*

*for they do not wait*

*patiently for food.*<sup>150</sup>

When the hypocrites said, '***we were only mocking***', God Most High said, '***God [Himself] mocks them***', i.e., He requites them for their mocking. Similarly when the people put their reins in the hands of carnal desires, they are lured into the wadis of separation. Their feet are not firmly planted in a place, so they wander in the labyrinth of absence. Just as he leaves the hypocrites ***in their insolence, bewildered***, he prolongs the period of their confused hopes. So when the time of their deaths draw nigh, their hopes are at their highest, while their actions are at their worst. That is the requital for what they did and the noxious result of what they produced. The beautification of their ugly acts in their eyes is the worst of their punishments, and their being content with their listlessness is their greatest misfortune.

***[2:16] Those are they who have bought error for guidance; so their commerce has not profited them; nor are they guided.***

The allusion in it is that those who have neglected what is due (*ḥuqūq*) by remaining in the familiar territories of worldly fortunes (*ḥuḏūz*) have lost their bargain, ***so their commerce has not profited them***. Those who are content with this world over the next are in manifest loss. Those who prefer this world or the next over the Real have the most intense loss. Although the one who suffers the loss of [the Gardens] of bliss will come up short, the one who is afflicted with distance from intimate conversation and with disengagement in his heart from his Protector, who remains in the captivity of carnal desires with no messenger to his heart, no attainment for his spirit, no intimate conversation with Him, no approach to Him, no

<sup>147</sup> For a discussion of the term 'people of habit' (*ahl al- 'āda*), see the Translator's Introduction.

<sup>148</sup> The translation here follows MSS K117, f.6b and Y101, f.9a.

<sup>149</sup> The translation here follows MSS K117, f. 6b and Y101, f.9a with the word 'weight' (*wazn*) rather than 'provision' (*rizq*), as found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>150</sup> Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Abū Nuwās in several works, including his *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā no. 3, p. 103). The poem indirectly references Qur'ānic verse 2:61.

witnessing in his innermost self – this is the one who [truly] suffers and is afflicted. If even a moment slips away, his Lord has slipped away. Moments have no substitutes or alternates. Thus someone said:

*You were the pupil*

*of my eye.*

*[The organ] by which I see*

*wept for you.*

*Anyone who has a will after you,*

*let him die,*

*for I used to be*

*a guard over you.*<sup>151</sup>

***[2:17] Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire, and when it illumined all about him God took away their light and left them in darkness, unable to see,***

The similitude God (s) strikes here for hypocrites is that of someone who kindles a fire in the beginning of the night, then the fire is extinguished and he is left in the darkness. Similarly, something of the benefits of this world appear to the hypocrites outwardly but then they are afflicted in the Hereafter by the pain of the punishment. Or [it may be that] something of their affirmation (*iqrār*) flashes, but then they remain in the darkness of their denial (*inkār*).

The allusion in this verse is to one who has a beautiful beginning travelling the path of spiritual desire (*ṭarīq al-irāda*). He toils for a time and endures one difficulty after another. He then returns to this world before having reached the truth and reverts to the darknesses of human nature within him. His stem sprouted but did not bear fruit. His branch blossomed but did not ripen. He hastened the eclipse of listlessness over the moons of His presence. The hand of subjugation has rejected him after the tongue of kindness beckoned him. His heart has moved away from closeness and his lower self has become full of rancor towards the seekers. He is as it is said:

*When passion settled in*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Muṣṭafā traces these lines to Ibrāhīm b. al-‘Abbās b. al-Ṣulī, as well as others. It is a lamentation for a lost son (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 59-60).

*and we said we were happy,  
we thought we were secure  
from growing apart.*

*Division sent its messengers  
in secret  
and destroyed what we had brought together  
in our union.*<sup>153</sup>

The allusion in this verse also pertains to one who possesses the lowest level of meanings but puts forth claims far above what he has. When the ongoing increase<sup>154</sup> he possesses in his states is cut off, he remains in the darkness of his claims.

There is also the one who relies on the rubble and glitter of this world. When [his] states have become like a well-trodden road, helped along by hope and rising expectation, death appears from the ambushes of the divine ruse. He leaves everything (*yatrūk al-kull*) but carries the burden forth (*yaḥmil al-kall*).

[2:18] *deaf, dumb, blind, they shall not return*

**Deaf** to hearing the calls of the Real with the ears of their hearts, **dumb** to whispered conversation with the Real with the tongue of their innermost selves, **blind** to witnessing the flow of decreed events with the eyes of their faculties of insight. **They shall not return** from their persistent shamelessness nor can they be deterred from their wholehearted embrace of errors.

It is said **deaf** to hearing through the Real, **dumb** to speaking through the Real, **blind** to studying creation through the Real. There was no predetermination for them to desist (*iqlā*), and no allotment to help them in being deterred (*irtidā*).

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<sup>152</sup> The MS K117, f.6b has ‘was complete’ (*tamma*) rather than ‘settled in’ (*qarra*).

<sup>153</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to trace this verse to another source (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 111).

<sup>154</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been filled in with the word *mādda* from MSS K117, f.6b and Y101, f.9b.



**[2:19] *Or as a cloudburst out of the heaven in which is darkness, and thunder, and lightening – they put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, cautious of death; and God encompasses the disbelievers.***

The meaning of His saying, ‘**Or**’, is because He gives either one of these two similitudes for [the hypocrites]. He compares the Qur’ān to rain descending from the heaven and compares the promises and threats in the Qur’ān to the thunder and lightening in the rain. He compares their seeking refuge in fleeing from hearing the Qur’ān, their distancing themselves from attentiveness, and their neglect in trying to gain insight, to those who put their fingers in their ears against hearing the sounds of thunder.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, the allusion is to the heedless when the admonitions of those who admonish reach their ears, or the lights of felicity shine on their hearts. If they would desist from their blind heedlessness, they would be happy. But they keep each other distracted by false hopes and have resolved upon their corrupt path. They make weak excuses and swear by God, ‘*Had we been able, we would have gone forth with you*’, *destroying their souls* [9:42] and they bring about the destruction by their own hands.

*Truly when the noble one  
gives you his love,  
he veils the ugly  
and brings the beautiful to light.*

*Similarly, when the one who is tired  
wants to break things off  
He becomes weary of being together  
and says, ‘That was that.’<sup>156</sup>*

**[2:20] *The lightening well-nigh snatches away their sight; whensoever it gives them light, they walk in it; and when the darkness is over them; they stop; had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight; Truly, God has power over all things.***

Part of the similitude of the hypocrites – as also the heedless – is that when they attend the places of admonition, or their hearts incline to gentleness, or some terror overwhelms them, their states move closer to repentance and their longing to turn [to God] becomes stronger.

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<sup>155</sup> There is a line of text missing in Basyūnī here which has been completed from MSS K117, f. 7a and Y101, f. 9b.

<sup>156</sup> Muṣṭafā found these lines in *Muḥāḍarāt al-‘Uḍabā’* but without attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 112).

But when they revert to their own planning<sup>157</sup> and seek counsel from those close to them, their family and offspring urge them to return to their world. They offer their advice, frightening them with weakness and dependency, so that their resolve becomes weak, their spiritual desire (*irāda*) declines and they become as it is said:

*Whenever he repents*

*he returns to his ignorance,*

*just as the one who is feeble*

*suffers a relapse.*<sup>158</sup>

He said, ‘***had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and sight***’, meaning the outward hearing and seeing of the hypocrites as well as their being deaf and blind inwardly. Similarly, the heedless and those who are content with the external aspects of Islam – God Most High has the power to negate the positive outcome (*tawfīq*) of their practice of outward acts of obedience (*ẓāhir al-ṭā’āt*), just as He has the power to negate the realization (*taḥqīq*) of what they have discovered from the purest of states (*ṣafā’ al-ḥālāt*).

***[2:21] O people, worship your Lord Who created you and those that were before you, so that you may be fearful.***

Worship is becoming harmonious (*muwāfaqa*) with the command and it is pouring all energy into requests (*taḥqīq*) for realization of the Unseen. The declaration of oneness (*tawḥīd*) enters one through the heart, disengagement (*tajrīd*) through the innermost self, becoming single-minded (*tafīrīd*) through intention, and humility through the soul. The surrender (*istislām*) is to the decree (*ḥukm*).

It is said, ‘worship Him’ by renouncing prohibited things, persevering in performing acts of obedience, welcoming obligatory acts with humility and lowliness, and avoiding detours in the way stations of laziness and indifference.

His saying ‘***so that you may be fearful***’ is to bring the command closer to them and to make it easier. By the word ‘may’ He keeps them at the bounds of fear and hope.

<sup>157</sup> Basyūnī has the word ‘contemplation’ (*tadabbur*) here, but the word ‘planning’ (*tadbīr*) from MSS K117, f. 7a and Y101, f. 9b makes more sense. Al-Qushayrī frequently uses the word *tadbīr* to describe the error individuals make when they imagine that they can direct the events in their lives.

<sup>158</sup> Al-Qushayrī also cites this verse in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 4:81. Muṣṭafā traces the verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs and adds another line: *The shaykh does not abandon his morals until he is hidden in the earth of his tomb* (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 73).

The real meaning of ‘fear [of God]’ (*taqwā*) is protecting oneself through conformity [to God’s command]<sup>159</sup> from the threats of punishment.

**[2:22] *He Who assigned to you the earth for a couch and heaven for an edifice; and sent down from the heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your provision; so set not up compeers to God, while you know.***

He is made known to them by the mention of the favors He has granted in the creation of the heaven for them as a roof raised (*saqf marjū*), the establishment of the earth for them as a couch laid out (*farsh mawḍū*), and the bringing forth of plants by the rain for them as a provision gathered (*rizq majmū*). It is said He freed them from the favor of simulacra (*amthāl*) by eliminating from [the notion] of cause (*‘illa*) that which is necessary.<sup>160</sup> So the heaven is sufficient for them as a covering, the earth as a bed, the permissible things as provision, obedience as a trade, worship as an occupation, remembrance as an intimate friend, and the Lord as a guardian – ***so set not up compeers with God*** and do not attach your hearts to others in seeking what you need. The Real (*swt*) is One alone in creating, there is no originator other than Him. When you imagine anything in events beneficial or harmful, good or bad, as originating from a created thing, this is in actuality a kind of idolatry (*shirk*).

***While you know*** that is not appropriate to raise the matter of your need with someone who has his own need. The attachment of one in need to another one in need and the reliance of the weak on the weak increases poverty and will not stop harmful occurrences.

**[2:23-24] *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have revealed to Our servant, then bring a sūra like it; and call your witnesses besides God if you are truthful. \* And if you do not and you will not, then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men, and stones, prepared for disbelievers.***

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<sup>159</sup> The translation here follows MSS K117, f. 7a and Y101, f. 10a in the words *bi’l-wifāq*, which echo the use of the word from the same root *muwāfaqa* in the first paragraph of this section. Baysūnī has *wa’l-wafā* and has to add *bi’l-tā’a* to correct the meaning. His reading, however, is also plausible as he demonstrates in a footnote comparing this to a similar passage in the *Risāla*.

<sup>160</sup> As al-Qushayrī says in one of his theological works, ‘There is no cause (*‘illa*) for His action (let Him be praised), wherefore one does not use the expression “why did He act”, since if there was a cause for His action and it was eternal, it would entail the eternity of its effect and this is impossible; and if it were temporally contingent, it would have another cause unto infinity and this is impossible, while if the cause needs no cause, the rest of contingent entities have no need of a cause’ (‘Al-Qushayrī’s “*Al-Fuṣūl fī l-Uṣūl*”’, translation by Richard M. Frank, in *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam*, p.78).

He covered the eyes of outsiders so that they did not see His beloved (š)<sup>161</sup> and they wandered in the wadis of conjectures because they had lost the light of solicitude. The Messenger's bringing signs to them and making miracles appear only increased their doubts and suspicions. This is the way of those who have turned away from the Real (s). The illumination of proofs only increases their blindness to the truth. God Most High said, '*But signs and warners do not avail a folk who will not believe*' [10:101]. In order to bring them to admit the proof, He informed them of their inability to compete with the miracle He gave them in the Qur'ān, which conquered humankind from the first to the last. He made them acknowledge<sup>162</sup> that even if they were to make common cause amongst themselves and strengthen themselves with others like them, and exert their utmost efforts and stratagems, they would not be able to bring a sura like any sura of the Qur'ān. He said, '*If you do not*' and then stated that they definitely did not have the capacity to do that and would not do it, for He said, '*and you will not*'. This was as if He said, 'Look at yourselves and be wary of the idolatry which will bring you the punishment (‘uqūba) of the fire, whose difficulty (šu‘ūba)<sup>163</sup> is such that *its fuel is men and stones*. If stones, with all their hardness, cannot withstand this fire, how can men with their weakness bear it? When the hearts of the believers became terribly concerned from hearing mention of the fire, He strengthened them and said, '*prepared for disbelievers*'. In that is good news for the believers. This is the way of the Real (s). When He causes fear in His enemies, he brings glad tidings to His friends.

Just as the deception of the disbelievers vanishes in encountering the miracles of the prophets (‘a), similarly the claims of the confused disappear at the appearance of the lights of the truthful. The mark of the one who makes false claims is the return of driving cries (rujū‘ al-ẓajr)<sup>164</sup> to the heart. The mark of the one with truthful intent is the occurrence of the subjugation (wuqū‘ al-qahr) of the heart. It is a rare individual who can distinguish between the two.<sup>165</sup>

[2:25] *And give glad tidings to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that theirs shall be Gardens underneath which rivers run*

<sup>161</sup> i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad.

<sup>162</sup> The translation follows the words *qarrara* ‘alayhim found in MSS K117, f. 7b and Y101, f. 10a rather than the words *qaddara* ‘alayhim in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>163</sup> The translation fills in the ambiguity in Basyūnī's edition with the word ‘difficulty’ (šu‘ūba) found in MSS K117, f. 7b and Y101, f. 10b.

<sup>164</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the words *ẓajr* and *zawājir* (plural of *ẓājir*) to refer to calls to forbidden or unseemly actions, as he indicates in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 37:2 where these words appear: *and by the drivers driving*. According to Lane, one of the meanings of the word *ẓajr* is the crying out to animals in a loud way to urge them to hold back or move onwards more quickly (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol.1, p.1216). See also al-Qushayrī's commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:269 below for a similar comparison of God's subjugation of the heart versus its yielding to the driving cries of other forces.

<sup>165</sup> See al-Qushayrī's discussion of how thoughts and suggestions come from different sources (the lower self, Satan, angels and the Real) in the section on ‘Thoughts’ (*khawāṭir*) in his *Risāla* (vol.1, p. 242).

The glad tidings of the Gardens are included to give information of the blessings awaiting the general body of believers, according to the description which is explained in the *tafsīr* literature. In addition to these blessings, He alludes to the glad tidings for the elite of immediate blessings which God has granted to them specifically. That which is to come is the Gardens of the reward (*mathwaba*) while these are the Gardens of nearness (*qurba*). Those are the meadows of recreation (*nuzha*) while these are the meadows of intimacy (*zulfa*). Those are the gardens of favors (*afḍāl*) while these are the gardens of communion (*wiṣāl*). Those are the raising of degrees (*darajāt*) while these are the breath of intimate conversation (*munājāt*). That is the matter of His generosity (*jūd*) while this is independence<sup>166</sup> through His existence (*wujūd*). That is the refreshment of mortal beings (*abshār*) while this is the promenade of the innermost selves (*asrār*). That is the kindness of giving to the external forms (*ẓawāhir*) while this is the unveiling of the covering from the innermost consciences (*sarā'ir*). That is the kindness of His gifts and favors (*nawālihi wa afḍalihi*) while this is the unveiling of His Beauty and Majesty (*jamālihi wa jalālihi*).

[2:25 cont'd] *whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they shall say, 'This is what we were provided with before'; they shall be given it in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall abide.*

The blessings of the people of the Garden will be renewed for them at every moment. They will think that the second [time] will be like the first, but when they taste it they will find it beyond what came first. Similarly the states in the innermost consciousnesses of the people of realities are forever rising. When one of them has risen from one place, he imagines that what he will meet in this [new] breath will be like what came previously. When he tastes it, he finds it more than that many times over, just as the one who spoke for them said:

*From your love,*

*I kept stopping at a way station.*

*The bewilderment of the deepest hearts*

*does not stop.*<sup>167</sup>

[2:26] *God is not ashamed to strike a similitude even of a gnat, or anything above it.*

<sup>166</sup> The translation follows the word 'independence' (*istiqlāl*) found in MSS K117, f. 7b and Y101, f. 10b rather than the word 'being preoccupied' (*istighāl*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>167</sup> Muṣṭafā states Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī was said to have passed away upon hearing this verse. He gives several other works by al-Qushayrī and others where it is quoted (Muṣṭafā, no. 35, pp. 99-100).

Being ashamed, for God Most High, means the relinquishment (*tark*) [of His free agency]. When He describes Himself as being ashamed of something, it means He does not do that, and when it is said, ‘He is not ashamed’, it means He does not mind doing that.

Creation, in relation to the existence of the Real, is in actuality less than a speck of dust in the air (*habā’ fī hawā’*) because this is the perishing of one limited thing in another. Therefore the two – the throne and the gnat – are the same in His power. The creation of the throne is not too troublesome or difficult for Him, nor is the creation of the gnat too insignificant or easy for him. He (s) is too holy to be attached to difficulty or ease. Since the matter can be described in this way, He is not ashamed to strike a similitude of the gnat, just as He is not ashamed to strike a similitude of the throne and what is below it.

It is said one aspect of the similitude of the gnat is the fact that when it is hungry, it becomes strong<sup>168</sup> and flies. When it is satiated, it splits open and dies. Similarly, *Surely mankind goes too far, for he thinks himself self-sufficient* [96:6-7].

It is said ***or anything above it*** means a [larger] flying insect (*dhubāb*). One aspect of the allusion [here] is the insolence of the fly in that it keeps returning no matter how much it is driven away. If that [quality] was in the lion, no human being would be safe from him. But when He created power in the lion, He created in him an aversion to humankind. When He created the insolence in the fly, He created weakness in him, calling attention through this to the perfection of His wisdom and the effectiveness of His power.

[2:26 cont’d] ***as for the believers, they know it is the truth from their Lord; but as for the disbelievers, they say, ‘What did God desire by this for a similitude?’***

As for those for whom the eyes of their innermost consciousnesses have been opened, they do not look to others or to traces (*āthār*)<sup>169</sup> unless it is with a view to crossing over (*i’tibār*)<sup>170</sup> or to increase the effectiveness of the faculty of insight (*ibtisār*). But for those whose eyes are

<sup>168</sup> The word *qawiyat* in MSS K117, f. 7b and Y101, f. 10b corrects the error in the Basyūnī text.

<sup>169</sup> See the Translator’s Introduction for a discussion of al-Qushayrī’s use of the term ‘trace’ (*athar*, pl. *āthār*).

<sup>170</sup> Al-Qushayrī is using the word *i’tibār* here to indicate the study of created things as indicators of hidden realities.

like a drunken man's<sup>171</sup> by virtue of their heedlessness, the similitudes only increase their ignorance and doubt.<sup>172</sup>

[2:26 cont'd] *Thereby, He leads many astray and thereby guides many; and thereby He leads none astray but the wicked.*

This book is a healing and mercy for some people and a trial and misfortune for others. Those who acknowledged Him on the Day of the Covenant by the lights of solicitude when they heard His words, '*Am I not your Lord?*' [7:172], remembered, at the time of the arrival of the intermediary (š),<sup>173</sup> the preexistence of His promise and the precedence of His love, so they increased greatly in their insight. [But] those whom He marked with the ignominy of separation and made speak that day about the Reckoning and the Terror only increased their denials when the prophetic call arrived. The one with true proofs would not be hidden from them today if they had not already strayed. Because of that, God Most High said, '*and thereby He leads none astray but the wicked*'.

[2:27] *Those such as break the covenant with God after its solemn binding, and such as cut what God has commanded to be joined; and such as do corruption in the land – they shall be the losers.*

The allusion in it is to the state of one who has traveled the way of spiritual desire (*irāda*), then returned to what ordinary people have. He claimed to be willing to abandon his soul yet proved insincere when things became serious. He gave up allusions to reality (*ishārāt al-ḥaqīqa*)<sup>174</sup> for concessions in the Sharī'a (*rukhaṣ al-sharī'a*). Just as the return of one who travels the way with his bodily self (*nafs*) is not praiseworthy so long as a dirham remains in his bag, so the return of one who quests with his heart (*qalb*) is not pleasing so long as a breath (*nafas*) remains in his spirit (*rūḥ*):

*Those who die*

*following the religion of guidance*

*find death*

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<sup>171</sup> A reference to Qur'ānic verse 15:14-15. *Sukkirat al-abṣār* can mean the blurry vision of a drunkard but also carries the connotation of being bewitched: *And even if We were to open for them a gate from the heaven, and they were to continue ascending through it, they would say, 'It is merely that our eyes have been dazzled. Nay, we are a folk bewitched!'*

<sup>172</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 8a and Y101, 11a here, omitting the word 'fetters' (*ankāl*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>173</sup> i.e., Muḥammad (š).

<sup>174</sup> The translation follows the use of the plural *ishārāt* in the MSS K117, f. 8a and Y101, 11a here.



*a sweet watering place.*<sup>175</sup>

***And such as cut what God has commanded to be joined:*** The joining of the cords of the Real is through the cutting of the cords of creation. The joining of what belongs to Him is not completed without cutting what belongs to you. When the matter is the reverse, the opposite is the case.

Among that which the servant has been commanded to join is the protection of the sacred relationship<sup>176</sup> of the people of this path. What one expends to achieve [this joining] is through sincerity of concerns, not the offering of favors. [The servants'] concerned efforts are dedicated (*mawqūfa*) to connecting the cords of this path and arranging its conditions, while their hearts are directed (*maṣrūfa*) to the expectation of the guardianship of God Most High for its people. The corruption of this path ***in the land*** is their negligence of the margins of their situations and the edges of their affairs. They make themselves too busy to guide a novice (*murīd*) with their words and too busy to sharpen the aim of a seeker (*qāṣid*) with their concerned efforts. This is some of what displeases the Real (s) in them.

Part of breaching the covenant is also that your innermost self turns away from witnessing Him for even a moment. Part of the cutting off of what you have been commanded to join is when even a breath of your worldly concerns enters at any time without upholding His right. Part of your corruption in the land is any hour which passes you in which you did not see Him. Surely that is the manifest loss, the grave trial, and the vast calamity.

***[2:28] How do you disbelieve in God, when you were dead, and He gave you life; then He shall make you dead, then He shall give you life, then to Him you shall be returned!***

These are words to provoke astonishment and gravity in the servant. With the appearance of the signs, his heart should not incline to disbelief.

It is said He makes Himself known to creation by the glimmers of His proofs and the flashes of His signs.<sup>177</sup> He said, '***When you were dead***', meaning a drop of sperm, its parts all the

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<sup>175</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to 'Amr b. Qinān (?) (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 92).

<sup>176</sup> The word translated here as 'sacred relationship' is *dhimām*. According to Lane, the word suggests a pact of protection of others with regard to their rights, security and honor. He describes it as 'a thing that should be sacred, or inviolable; or which one is under an obligation to reverence, respect, or honour, and defend' (*Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 976).

<sup>177</sup> In the section on 'Glimmers, Gleams of the Rising, and Flashes' (*al-lawā'ih wa'l-ṭawāli 'wa'l-lawāmi'*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī describes the 'glimmers' and 'flashes' as precursors to the 'suns of recognition' (vol. 1, p. 228).



same, '*and He gave you life*' as a human being with some of the parts of the sperm designated to be bone, some parts flesh, some parts hair, and some parts skin, etc.

*Then He shall make you dead* in making you bones and fragments,<sup>178</sup> *then He shall give you life* in raising you up after you were dead, *then to Him you shall be returned*, meaning to whatever He previously determined [for you] in happiness or misery.

*You were dead* through your ignorance of Us, *and He gave you life* in your knowledge of Us, *then He shall make you dead* to your witnesses, *then He shall give you life* through Him in taking you from yourselves, *then to Him you shall be returned*, meaning to preserving the precepts of the law in carrying out what is due.<sup>179</sup>

It is said, *you were dead* because your lower selves remained and *He gave you life* through the annihilation of your lower selves, *then He shall make you dead* from yourselves from witnessing, so that you will not pay heed to [the annihilation] and corrupt yourselves. *Then He shall give you life* in taking you from yourselves, *then to Him you shall be returned* by your being turned about in His grasp (*swt*).

It is said He holds their states in check so that there is no perpetual life and no complete annihilation. The more they say, 'this is life' – while they are thus – the more He turns them and annihilates them. Whenever they become annihilated, He affirms them and gives them subsistence, so they are forever between negation and affirmation, between subsistence and annihilation, and between wakefulness and erasure.<sup>180</sup> His way is like this with them.

[2:29] *He it is who created for you all that is in the earth;*

He made all created things subject to them in the sense of their obtaining benefit in each thing from them. They dwell on the earth, live under the sky, are guided by the stars, and benefit from every created thing in other ways. But they do not contemplate any perceived thing or effect ( '*ayn wa athar* ') without recognizing the perfection of His power and the appearance of His lordship in it.

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<sup>178</sup> A reference to Qur'ānic verses 17:49 and 17:98: *And they say, 'What, when we are bones and fragments, shall we really be raised up in a new creation?'*

<sup>179</sup> i.e., your mystical experiences will not keep you from following the precepts of the religious law.

<sup>180</sup> Many of the terms in this paragraph are discussed in sections of al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*: 'Annihilation and Subsistence' (*fanā' wa 'l-baqā'*) (vol.1, pp. 211-213), 'Wakefulness and Drunkenness' (*al-ṣaḥw wa 'l-sukr*) (vol.1, pp. 217-219), 'Effacement and Affirmation' (*al-maḥw wa 'l-ithbāt*) (vol.1, pp. 222-223).

It is said He has paved the way of knowing for them and awakened them to what He has singled out for them in beautiful action. Moreover He taught them the most sublime aspiration inasmuch as He claimed their works and states for Himself alone, for He said, '*Do not prostrate to the sun and moon* [41:37]'.

[2:29 cont'd] *then He turned (istawā) to heaven and leveled them seven heavens and He has knowledge of all things.*

The things that have been brought into existence (*akwān*) are laid out in a uniform way (*istawat*) by His power; it is not that the Real (*s*) in His Essence sat Himself down (*istawā*) on any created thing. How could that be!<sup>181</sup> Unicity (*aḥadiyya*) and Self-Sufficiency (*ṣamadiyya*) are His reality. What some have imagined regarding the possibility of Him being in a specific place is absurd since one 'sits' in a place but the Real (*s*) in His Essence does not sit in any place.

[2:30] *And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am appointing on earth a viceregent', they said, 'What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?'; He said, 'Assuredly, I know what you know not'.*

This is the beginning of the disclosure of His secret regarding Adam and his progeny. He commanded clay to be extracted from every patch of ground and then commanded that it be left to ferment for forty mornings. Every one of the angels was full of amazement: 'What is the property (*ḥukm*)<sup>182</sup> of this clay?' When He assembled [Adam's] form, they had never seen anything like it in marvelous craftsmanship and astonishing wisdom. So when He said, '*I am appointing on earth...*', conjectures were thrown about, hearts were scattered and accusations were made. It was just as was said:

*How often I have seen  
someone beautiful  
but among mortals my choice*

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<sup>181</sup> *Istawā* has all of the meanings referred to in this verse and al-Qushayrī's commentary: to turn towards (in a straight way, like an arrow); to be made level or uniform, or to sit oneself down on something (in a firm and steady way).

<sup>182</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the word *ḥukm* to describe how God wisely judges and determines specific things, acts and occurrences. As a legal term, it means how acts are categorized according to the Sharī'a. Al-Qushayrī uses the word in this sense but also in a much broader sense to describe how God has determined the specific components and events of the universe with His wisdom (*ḥikma*). It is translated in various ways through this translation, including 'property', 'precept', and 'decree'.

has fallen upon you.<sup>183</sup>

It is said God (*swt*) created all the things He created, but did not say about any of them what He said about Adam, since He said, '***I am appointing on earth a viceregent***'. The external sense of these words resembles mutual consultation, if it were to be among created beings. The Real (*swt*) created the Gardens with what is in them and the Throne with what it has in well-ordered parts and perfection of form, but He did not say, 'I am creating a throne or a garden or an angel'. But He said of Adam, '***I am appointing on earth a viceregent***', as a way of conferring honor and distinction.

[Section] The words of the angels, '***What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein?***' were not an objection to the divine decree but rather a way of seeking understanding. To interpret the expression in such a way as to absolve the angels of any blame is more fitting, since they are sinless. God Most High said [in reference to the angels], '*Who do not disobey God in what He commands them*' [66:6].

It is said that in this speech the Real (*s*) brought out the hidden haughtiness of their obedience and the attention to their own acts in their hearts. They spoke openly about these hidden affairs of their innermost selves in saying, '***While we glorify You with praise***'. Then verily the Real (*s*) informed them that the merit of knowledge is more perfect than the merit of action and they had the greater part and superiority in action while Adam had the greater and more abundant part of knowledge. Hence his merit and rank were made apparent.

It is said the Real (*s*) did not say, 'They will not do corruption therein and will not shed blood',<sup>184</sup> but rather, '***Assuredly, I know what you know not*** regarding my pardon of them'. Its meaning is, 'You know their disobedience but I know my pardon of them'.<sup>185</sup>

It is also said that in their glorification there is the disclosure of their act and the publicizing of their special qualities and merit, whereas in His pardoning of the disobedient among the children of Adam, there is the disclosure of His (*s*) generosity and mercy. The Real (*s*) does not need the obedient acts of anyone. Indeed, if the worthiness of their being praised becomes obvious because of their glorification, [even more so has] God affirmed the worthiness of the Real (*s*)<sup>186</sup> being praised because of [His] pardoning.

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<sup>183</sup> Muṣṭafā traces a slightly different version of the verse to al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, which has the phrase *li-shaqwatī* instead of 'mortals' (*al-warā*). The meaning becomes very different with these words: 'but because of my misfortune my choice has fallen upon you' (al- (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, pp. 60-1).

<sup>184</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 8b and Y101, f. 12a here in the use of the pronoun 'they' rather than the pronoun 'you' found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>185</sup> This sentence has been added from MS K117, f. 8b.

<sup>186</sup> The translation follows the word 'the Real (*haqq*)' found in MSS K117, f. 8b and Y101, f. 12a rather than the word 'Creator' (*khāliq*) in the Basyūnī edition.

It is said, '**Assuredly, I know what you know not** of the purity of the beliefs of the faithful among them in their love for Us and the maturity of their innermost hearts in preserving Our Covenant, even if their outward selves are sullied by disobedience', just as it is said:

*When the lover*

*has committed a single sin,*

*his good qualities*

*produce a thousand intercessors.*<sup>187</sup>

It is also said, '**Assuredly, I know what you know not** of My love for them. You disclose your states while I have made My secrets in them hidden from them'. Regarding this they have recited:

*Those who defame*

*have not diminished your rank*

*with me nor has*

*the slander hurt you.*

*It is as if by criticizing you*

*they have praised you*

*in my sight,*

*but they do not know.*<sup>188</sup>

It is also said, '**Assuredly, I know what you know not** of the breaking of their hearts even though they have done ugly acts, and the immoderation of your hearts in disclosing your glorification and sanctification. You are in the rank of harmony (*wifāq*), the sinlessness of your acts, and the adornment of your glorification, while they are disavowed by their own witnesses and are lowly in their hearts. Truly, because of the breaking of the hearts of servants there is a powerful protective pact with Us'.

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<sup>187</sup> Muṣṭafā located the verse in several sources but with no reliable attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 76).

<sup>188</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes these verses to Abū Nuwās based on several sources, and to Al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf in another (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 28).

It is said, ‘What significance is there to your glorification if not for My grace?’ And, ‘What harm is there in their sins when there is My pardon?’

It is also said, ‘I clothed you with your obedience and clothed them with My mercy, so you are in the bodice of your obedience and the garb of your sanctification and glorification, while they are enveloped in My pardon and veiled in My mercy. I have clothed them with the robe of My generosity and wrapped them in the cloak of My pardon’.

It is said, ‘My protection from sin has made you happy, yet they have received My mercy. My protection from sin to You is connected to your existence while the relationship of My mercy to them is eternal’.

It is said, ‘While your virtuous one (*muḥsin*) may take precedence in sinlessness, their sinner (*mujram*) is drowned in mercy’.

It is said. ‘Their reliance on Me purifies their states. It protects them in acknowledging ignorance so that they declare themselves free of different types of knowledge except to the degree granted them by the Real.’ *They said, ‘Glory be to you! We know not except what You have taught us’* [2:32].

**[2:31] And He taught Adam the names, all of them; then He presented them to the angels and said, ‘Now tell Me the names of these if you speak truly’.**

The universality of His saying **names** necessarily implies the totality, and the connection of this word to **all of them** indicates comprehensiveness and verification. Just as He taught [Adam] the names of created things, all of them (according to what is articulated in the *tafsīr* of Ibn ‘Abbās and others), He also taught him the names of the Real (*s*). But He only disclosed to [the angels] the locus He chose for knowledge of the names of created things and by that [disclosure] the measure of [Adam’s] superiority over them. As for his uniqueness in knowing His names (*s*), that was a secret which no angel who is nigh (*malak muqarrab*)<sup>189</sup> was aware of. One who does not have a rank equal to Adam in knowing the names of created things, what hope could there be in his approaching the names of the Real and grasping the secrets of the Unseen? Since being selected for knowing the names of created things makes it proper for the angels to prostrate before him, what is one to think about being selected for knowing the names of the Real (*s*)? What is owed to the one who is honored with that?

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<sup>189</sup> *The angels who are nigh (al-malā’ika al-muqarrabūn) are mentioned in Qur’ānic verse 4:172.*

It is said the special status of the angels is in [their] glorification and sanctification [of God]. These acts of obedience are appropriate for created beings, for surely obedience is the mark of servants, and servants alone. [On the other hand], knowledge, in general, is a kind of commendation (*madh*)<sup>190</sup> that is absolutely necessary in describing the Real (*s*), one that is not appropriate for anything other than Him. Among the category of created beings, there is no one more perfect in honoring Him than the one who honors Him through His own explanation of His attributes.

It is said He honored [Adam] privately with what He taught him, and then explained His having selected him and having given him precedence on the day of the public revealing.

It is said [that in the words] ***then He presented them***, the [word] ‘then’ (*thumma*) is a particle of extension or delay. [It might refer] to Adam, in which case it means He gave him time for that which had been established in his heart and for the recognizing of what became known to him by His truth. Then at the time [of the public revealing] He asked him about what he had recognized as true and knew with certainty. Or [the ‘then’ might refer] to the angels when He said to them, in order to frighten them, ‘***Now tell Me***’. Because He had not presented the information to them, they were bewildered. Because He had presented it to Adam, he responded and gave information (*ajāba wa akhbara*), spoke and was successful (*naṭaqa wa aḥḥaḥa*), which was a manifestation of His prior solicitude in his affair.

His words ‘***if you speak truly***’ contain an allusion to the fact that [the angels] objected to the claim of special status, and the advantage and privilege conferred upon Adam, so He informed them that the preference (*faḍl*) is in the eternal (*qadīm*) selection of [Adam], not in the offering (*taqdīm*) of their glorification. The Real (*s*) knew that their types of knowledge did not include knowledge of the names of created things, but then He charged them with saying what they were. This became the clearest of proofs that the affair was His affair and the decree His decree. To Him belongs the imposition of obligation (*taklīf*) on the one who is asked to obey. [This] is a reply to those who imagine that the decrees of the Real (*s*) are dependent on what the heedless deem to be good in their claims based on rational determinations. No, rather it belongs to Him to charge what He wills on whom He wills. The beautiful is what He decrees to be beautiful and the ugly is what He decrees to be ugly.<sup>191</sup>

**[2:32] *They said, ‘Glory be to You! We know not except what You have taught us. Surely You are the Knower, Wise’.***

<sup>190</sup> Al-Qushayrī seems to be referring here to praise that comprehends the attributes of God.

<sup>191</sup> Basyūnī adds a note saying that this is a reply to the Mu‘tazila who judged divine actions by human intellectual standards.

They offered praise before they made their apology and declared the truth of His judgment over any objection they might have. It means, ‘We have no knowledge of that which You have asked us about and there is no blame that can be directed to You for charging those who incapable with something You know they cannot do. ***Surely You are the Knower, Wise***, i.e., what You do is true and sincere, there is none who can pass judgment over You, and there is no foolishness nor ugliness from You’.

***[2:33] He said, ‘Adam, tell them their names’; And when he had told them their names He said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know the Unseen in the heavens and the earth?, And I know what you reveal and what you were hiding.’***

Among the traces of the divine solicitude to Adam (‘a’) is that when He said to the angels, ‘*Now tell Me*’ [2:31], they were seized with a fear of speaking, especially since He asked that they tell Him something their types of knowledge did not comprehend. But because of the information Adam (‘a’) had, [God] directed him to inform [the angels] and said, ‘***tell them their names***’, and Adam was not overly fearful in speaking to them. When Adam (‘a’) informed them of the names their types of knowledge lacked, his merit became apparent to them, and He said, ‘***Did I not tell you that I know the Unseen in the heavens and the earth?***’, meaning what the different types of knowledge of creation lack. ‘***And I know what you reveal***’ regarding [your] acts of obedience and [what you] hide in believing in [your] superiority over Adam (‘a’).

[Section] When the Real (s) wanted to choose Adam, He protected him, taught him, and showed him the effects of his care until he said what he said [about the names]. When He wanted to execute His decree regarding him, He caused forgetfulness to enter him so that he forgot His covenant in the presence and transgressed His limit. God Most High said, ‘*And We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We did not find in him any constancy*’ (20:115). The moment which solicitude favored promoted knowledge and goodness completely, while the moment which made the decree take effect returned him to the state of forgetfulness and disobedience. Thus the decrees of the Real (s) are in what they make come and go. The worshipper is made lowly by His decree and He is *doer of what He desires* [11:107, 85:16].

[Section] When they imagined obtaining preference for themselves by their glorification and sanctification, He informed them that the carpet of majesty is too holy to be adorned by the obedience of those who obey or to be defiled by the errors of stubborn deniers. Their returning to prostration before Adam made manifest [God’s] freedom from need from any agreement or opposition [of created beings].

[2:34] *And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate yourselves to Adam; so they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs, who refused and disdained; and so he became one of the disbelievers.*

The prostration would not be a form of worship to [Adam], in and of himself, but rather a way of conforming to [God’s] (s) command. It was as if their prostration to Adam was worship of God because it was by His command. It was a way of showing respect to Adam because He commanded them to do it to honor his affair. So it is as if that was a kind of submission to [Adam], but one that should not be called worship because the true meaning of worship is the utmost submission and that is not appropriate for anything but [God] (s).

It is said He explained that His (s) sanctity is through His Own Majesty (*jalāl*), not through their acts. What accrues to them is the borrowing of this beauty (*tajammul*) by their [acts of] sanctification and glorification. He Who is exalted (*yajillu*) is the One Who has exalted Himself (*ajallahu*) by His Own exaltation (*ijlālihi*), not by their acts, and the One who is mighty has been made mighty by His (s) Own power. His power exalts beyond the exaltation of created beings (*jalla ‘an ijlāl al-khalq qudruhu*) and His mention is magnified beyond the magnification of created beings (*‘azza ‘an i‘zāz al-khalq dhikruhu*).

His words, ‘*So they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs*’: He refused in his heart (*qalb*) and disdained to prostrate with his self (*nafs*). He was among the disbelievers in [God’s] prior determination and knowledge. In the time period in which Iblīs was emboldened by his obedience, he used to strut about in the vest of his conformity [to God’s command and decree]. [The angels] acknowledged his superior rank and believed in the worthiness of his distinction. His affair became as it is said:

*The lamp of communion*

*was shining between us.*

*A wind of separation blew on it*

*and it was extinguished.<sup>192</sup>*

He used to consider himself deserving of the claim to superiority and worthy of nearness and special status.

*He passed the night well*

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<sup>192</sup> Muṣṭafā states he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 81).



*and the world<sup>193</sup> was peaceful.*

*He woke up one day*

*and times had changed.<sup>194</sup>*

No prior obedience benefited him, no previous reply freed him, no intercession of any intercessor reached him, and no prior solicitude held him fast. When fate prevails over someone, toil does not benefit (*wa-man ghalabahu al-qaḍā' lā yanfa 'ahu al-'anā'*). What originated from Adam was a human error so he experienced a singular mercy. But as for Iblīs, he experienced eternal misery and succumbed to fate and destiny. His hope was lost and his toil was in vain (*khāba rajā'uhu wa-ḍalla 'anā'uhu*).<sup>195</sup>

**[2:35] *And We said, 'Adam dwell and your wife in the Garden and eat thereof easefully where you desire; but do not come near this tree lest you be evildoers'.***

He settled him in the Garden but with his entry established the tree of the trial. If not for the prior decree, this blossoming tree would have been changed to a withered one, its greenery dried out, its existence forgotten, and Adam's hand would not have reached to its leaves to piece them together onto himself,<sup>196</sup> and what happened to him would not have happened. If this tree had kept growing so that his hand could not reach it, all that confusion would not have occurred in his affair, but what had been predetermined appeared from the decree. There was no place better than the Garden, no human being more intelligent than Adam, no better counselor than the words of the allusion of the Real to him. There was nothing odd (*gharība*) from [Adam] before he did what he did, and no resolve (*'aẓīma*) more powerful than his resolve. But divine power cannot be contested and the decree cannot be opposed (*wa-lakinna 'l-qudrata lā tukābara wa 'l-ḥukma lā yu 'āraḍa*).

It is said when He said to him, ***'dwell and your wife in the Garden and eat thereof easefully'*** there was an allusion to the fact that it is natural for created beings to dwell comfortably with other created beings, and to want to seek the good things of life. Alone, Adam (*'a*) had every good and well-being, but when one like him, the spouse, came, the fangs of sedition (*anyāb al-ḥitna*) appeared and the door to tribulation (*bāb al-miḥna*) was opened. When He dwelled together with Eve, he followed her in what she suggested to eat and what happened, happened. Indeed it is said:

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<sup>193</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 9b with the word 'world' (*dunyā*) here. Basyūnī writes that he corrected the manuscript he was working from with a version attributed to Ibn Qutayba in *'Uyūn al-akhbār*.

<sup>194</sup> Muṣṭafā does not mention any other references for this verse other than where al-Qushayrī quotes it again later in his *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* (Muṣṭafā, no. 12, p. 28).

<sup>195</sup> Two lines have been transliterated here to give an example of the rhyming patterns throughout the paragraph.

<sup>196</sup> A reference to Qur'ānic verses 7:22 and 20:121.

*There is an ancient disease  
in the children of Adam,  
which is the youthful passion  
of one human being for another.*<sup>197</sup>

[Section] Whenever anything is prohibited to the son of Adam, his urgings to approach it increase. Everything was permitted to Adam (‘a) in the Garden – only one tree was prohibited. In what has been transmitted about this, there is no mention of his hand reaching out towards anything that was permitted to him. [Rather] he lost his patience and plunged into what was prohibited to him – this is the attribute of created beings.

[Section] [God] gave information only on the end result of placing Adam in the Garden and doing what led to his expulsion from it. When He said, ‘*I am appointing on earth a vicegerent*’ [2:30], how could [Adam] have remained in the Garden?

It is said Adam (s) became the object of praise (*maḥmūd*) for the angels and the object for prostration (*masjūd*) for all. On his head was the crown of communion (*wuṣṣla*), on his waist the belt of closeness (*qurba*), and on his neck the necklace of nearness (*zulfā*). There was no one above him in rank (*rutba*), no individual like him in high status (*rif‘a*). The call was going out at every moment continuously for him, ‘O Adam, O Adam!’ But before nightfall his clothes were stripped from him, his intimacy robbed and the angels were driving him violently to leave without delay:

*I thought I was safe but He ordained for me  
a ruse from my place of security.  
Like this are those  
who think themselves safe from lovers.*<sup>198</sup>

When Adam (‘a) lost his way, he did not remain but an hour and left with a thousand rebukes. It was as is said:

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<sup>197</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Ashja‘ al-Sulamī (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 112).

<sup>198</sup> Muṣṭafā was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 28).

*To Allah belongs the good deeds of youthfulness.*

*They set out in the morning*

*like kings and return at night*

*like paupers.*<sup>199</sup>

[Section] He prohibited him from approaching the tree by His command (*bi-amrihi*), and from this cast him away by His compelling force (*bi-qahrihi*), and disguised him with what He had hidden in him of His secret (*bi-sirrihi*).

[2:36] *Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom and brought them out of what they were in*

He **caused them to slip** (*azallahumā*), i.e., ‘he made them slip’ (*ḥamalahumā ‘alā’l-zalla*). In actuality nothing gave them free agency except the divine power and nothing was turning them about except the divine decree. He **brought them out of what they were in** openly with respect to rank and degree, but [secretly] their standing only increased in nobility and worth in the determination of the Real (s).

[2:36 cont’d] *and We said, ‘Go down some of you an enemy to the other’*

Although He sowed enmity between the two of them and Satan, He (s) was with Adam and sided with him in the victory decreed for them.<sup>200</sup>

[Section] Satan has no substantial weight in asserting His enmity, for the special status of the Real (s) is invincible. God Most High said, ‘*Truly over My servants you shall have no warrant*’ [15:42].

[Section] If Satan were to have authority in seducing others, he would have had the possibility of guiding himself. How can that be? The unique ability to create every thing is one of the characteristics that describe [God] (s).

[2:36 cont’d] *and in the earth a dwelling shall be yours, and enjoyment for a while.*

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<sup>199</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the first part of the verse to Abū’l-Ṣalt (Muṣṭafā, no. 42, p. 101-2).

<sup>200</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 10a and Y101, f. 14a for the last part of this sentence.

The place of assembly and familiarity for corporeal forms (*ashkāl*) are the regions of the earth. The place of acquaintance and pasture for the spirits is beyond<sup>201</sup> the throne. The expression ‘beyond’ (*warā*), though, is a metaphor or hyperbole here. How could aspirations have any connection to events? How could the ascent of intentions towards realities share a location with anything else?<sup>202</sup>

**[2:37] *Thereafter Adam received certain words from his Lord and He relented to him; truly He is the Relenting, the Merciful.***

Certain words passed the lips of Adam with the Real (*s*) and certain words came from the Real (*s*) to Adam’s ears. They have recited:

*When we are afraid  
of the eyes of observers,  
the secrets in the hearts  
speak.*<sup>203</sup>

The Real (*s*) spoke in general terms about that [conversation] in order to keep the story veiled, or to leave open the possibility of equivocal meaning (*iḥtimāl*), different opinions (*ẓunūn*) and a place for interpretation (*ta’wīl*) regarding what it might mean.

It is possible that the words of Adam (*‘a*) might have been an excuse and vindication, and the words of the Real (*s*) were by way of acceptance and favor. According to the *tafsīr* traditions, His (*t*) words to him were, ‘Are you in flight from me, O Adam?’ Likewise, his words (*‘a*) to Him were *Our Lord we have wronged ourselves* (7:23), and he said, ‘Are You the one evicting me from the Garden?’ He said, ‘Yes’. Adam said, ‘Will You return me to it?’ and He said, ‘Yes’.

<sup>201</sup> I’m following here the word ‘beyond’ or ‘behind’ (*warā*) from MSS K117, f. 10a and Y101, f. 14a rather than the word ‘cloak’ (*ridā*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>202</sup> The meaning of this passage is obscure. Perhaps al-Qushayrī is suggesting that spirits (*arwāḥ*) are composed of aspirations (*himam*) and intentions (*quṣūd*) that exist outside the dimensions of space and time.

<sup>203</sup> According to Muṣṭafā, the verse is attributed to the *Diwān Majnūn Laylā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 14, p. 28).

It is said when He commanded his expulsion from the Garden, He made what He told him in His exalted speech a provision so that it would be a remembrance and preparation [for his journey]:

*I remember the days of protection,  
then my liver  
goes weak from  
fear of being cut off.<sup>204</sup>*

The conversations of lovers cannot be explained and outsiders will not fully understand them. By way of allusion (*ishāra*), and not by the meaning provided by commentary (*tafsīr*) or interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the decree for the Unseen was thus. The Real (s) wanted that to suggest the state of lovers at the time of separation. In times of farewell, it is said, 'When you leave me, don't forget me. If one day news of me becomes less for you, do not choose another in place of me!' And it is also possible to say, 'If your coming (*wuṣūluka*) has eluded me, please don't let your emissary (*rasūluka*) be late to me.'

**[2:38] *We said, 'Go down from it all together, yet there shall come to you from Me guidance, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.***

After bad manners on the carpet, one is brought to the door. When Adam ('a) behaved badly at the source of nearness, God Most High said, '*Go down some of you an enemy to the other; and in the earth a dwelling shall be yours* [2:36] after you had a place of nearness for dwelling and enjoyment for a while'. They were enjoying ease, but in the end they returned to want. They have recited:

*When they became poor they clung<sup>205</sup> to poverty,  
hoping for a reward.  
Even when things were easy for them  
they hastened to return to that state.<sup>206</sup>*

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<sup>204</sup> Muṣṭafā notes several individuals to whom this verse is attributed, including Majnūn Laylā Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 76-77).

<sup>205</sup> I'm following the MSS K117, f. 10b and L101, f. 14a here with 'clung to' ('*uḍū*') because it matches the poems found elsewhere by Muṣṭafā.

At the same time that He expelled him from the Garden and caused him to descend to the earth, He gave him the glad tidings that He would return him to his [former] condition if he would be inclined in his heart to return. He said, '*Yet there shall come to you from Me guidance, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve*'.<sup>206</sup>

[2:39] *As for the disbelievers who deny Our signs, those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein*'.

Those who receive favors without gratitude and pay no heed to affirming (*taṣdīq*) and recognizing (*taḥqīq*) [the truth] will have a painful punishment in the end and a separation in the here and now.

[2:40] *O Children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you;*

The real meaning of 'favor' (*ni'ma*) according to the scholars is an unadulterated pleasure, as well as that which causes [the pleasure]. According to the people of reality favor is what causes you to witness, remember, or brings you to the One who grants the favor, or does not veil you from Him. It can be divided into the favor of mortal beings (*abshār*) and external things (*ẓawāhir*), and the favor of spirits (*arwāḥ*) and innermost hearts (*sarā'ir*). The first are aspects of comforts and the second are types of witnessings and unveilings. Among the inner favors are the knowledge of hearts and the love of spirits and the witnessings of the innermost hearts.

[Section] It is said He commanded the Children of Israel to remember the favors and He commanded the community of Muḥammad (ṣ) to remember the One who grants them. The difference is between those who are told, '*remember My favor*' and those who are told, '*So remember Me, I will remember you*' [2:152].

[2:40 cont'd] *and fulfill My covenant, and I shall fulfill your covenant; and have awe of Me*.

[For the terms of the covenant], He (ṣ) asks for the safekeeping of knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and we ask for the means to forgiveness (*maghfira*). He asks for the safekeeping of His love

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<sup>206</sup> Muṣṭafā gives several slightly different versions of the verse, one attributed to 'Arābī, and several without attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 61).

(*maḥābb*) and we ask for the kindness of His reward (*thawāb*). He asks for presence at the door (*bāb*) and we ask for the generous place of return (*ma'āb*).

‘**Fulfill My** [part of the] **covenant** by safeguarding the secret (*sirr*), **and I shall fulfill your** [part of the] **covenant** with beautiful kindness (*birr*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant which you accepted on the Day of the Solemn Binding (*mīthāq*), and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant which I insured for you on the Day of the Encounter (*talāq*)’.<sup>207</sup>

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in not preferring others (*ghayrī*) to Me, and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in not barring you from My kindness and good (*khayrī*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in caring for the things I have established in you in trust (*wadā'i*) and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in what has been made lasting for you in the splendors of the flashes (*lawāmi*) and the gleams of the rising (*tawāli*)’.<sup>208</sup>

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in safeguarding My secrets (*asrārī*) and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in the beauty of My acts of kindness (*mabārī*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in seeking the continuance of knowledge of Me (*irfānī*) and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in continuing My beneficence (*iḥsānī*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in performing service to Me and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant with kindness in accepting it from you’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in performing the best efforts and works (*al-mujāhada wa'l-mu'āmalā*) and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in continuing intimate communication and witnessing (*al-muwāṣala wa'l-mushāhada*)’.

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<sup>207</sup> The Day of the Encounter (*yaum al-talāq*) is mentioned in verse 40:15.

<sup>208</sup> See the section in al-Qusharyī's *Risāla* on ‘Glimmers, Gleams of the Rising and Flashes’ (*al-lawā'ih wa'l-tawāli wa'l-lawāmi*), vol. 1, pp. 228-230.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in absolving yourself of power and strength (*al-hawl wa ’l-munna*) and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in conferring abundance and grace (*al-tawl wa ’l-minna*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in favoring [Me] (*tafḍīl*) and relying [on Me] (*tawakkul*), and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in being sufficient [for you] and bestowing favor (*tafaḍḍul*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in sincerity of love (*maḥabba*), and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in the perfection of nearness (*qurba*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant being content from Me with Me, and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant giving you satisfaction in yourselves’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in the abode of the Unseen on the carpet of service by tightening the belt of obedience and exerting the utmost effort, and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in the abode of nearness on the carpet of communion with perpetual intimacy, vision, the hearing of speech, and the perfection of nearness’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in renouncing carnal desires (*shahawāt*), and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in being sufficient for you with these demands (*muṭālabāt*)’.

‘Fulfill My [part of the] covenant in forever saying, “My Lord, My Lord”, and I shall fulfill your [part of the] covenant in saying to you, “My servant, My servant”’.

***And have awe of Me***, i.e. ‘fear Me alone because of My unique power to bring things into existence’. Fear is not appropriate towards those who do not have so much as a particle or a favor.

***[2:41] And believe in what I have revealed, confirming that which is with you; and be not the first to disbelieve in it. And do not sell My signs for a small price; and fear Me.***



The allusion is to the fact that [the servant] combines his belief through exposition (*bayān*) with his belief through demonstrative proof (*burhān*).<sup>209</sup> The generality of believers have belief in demonstrative proof based on reasoning (*istidlāl*), while the elite of the believers have belief through exposition by virtue of being drawn near (*iqbāl*). The Real (*s*) has drawn near to them and so they have believed in God. The final states of their belief are through eye-witnessing and that is for the elect of the elect.

***And be not the first to disbelieve in it:*** ‘Do not [be the ones to] introduce disbelief as an ongoing practice’, for surely the responsibility of the initiator in what he practices is greater than the responsibility of the imitator in what he follows.

***And do not sell My signs for a small price:*** ‘Do not prefer your cheap worldly portion (*ḥazz*) over the grandeur of My truth (*ḥaqq*)’.

***And fear Me:*** Those who fear His punishment are many, but those who are in awe of knowing and seeing Him are rare.

***[2:42] And do not obscure the truth with falsehood; and do not conceal the truth while you know.***

‘Do not imagine that the two opposites can be joined for you in harmony or that you can be in one state in two places’, [for the servant] is either open-hearted (*mabsūt*) in truth (*ḥaqq*) or tied (*marbūt*) to worldly concerns (*ḥazz*). The occurrence of the two situations at one time is impossible.

***‘And do not obscure the truth with falsehood*, defiling (*tadnīs*), *and do not conceal the truth*, deceiving (*talbīs*), *while you know* that what is due to the Truth (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) is sanctification (*taqdīs*)’.** They have recited:

*O you who are marrying*

*al-Thurayā to Suhayl,*<sup>210</sup>

<sup>209</sup> The Qur’ān uses both words to describe information given to man: *bayān* occurs in 3:138 and 75:19; and *burhān* in 4:174, 12:24, and 28:32.

<sup>210</sup> Muṣṭafā identifies al-Thurayā as the daughter of ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith b. Umayya b. ‘Abd al-Shams. He gives Suhayl’s full name as Suhayl b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf, and says he was from Yemen (and therefore far from al-Thurayā’s clan). But the names are also the names of two stars (Lane vol. 1, p. 1454).

*by your acknowledgement of the everlasting existence of God,  
how can they meet?*

*She is of the northern region  
when she rises  
while Suhayl  
is from the south.*<sup>211</sup>

[2:43] *And establish prayer, and pay the alms, and bow with those that bow.*

‘Keep in mind the good manners of presence (*ḥadra*), for the preservation of good manners is the most perfect type of service’. The allusion in giving alms is to the almsgiving of aspirations, just as you fulfill the almsgiving of wealth. The one who spoke for them said:

*Everything has  
an almsgiving to be paid.  
The almsgiving of beauty  
is a mercy like Mine.*<sup>212</sup>

He causes the increases in one’s aspirations and the subtleties of one’s vision to flow over those who pursue and seek<sup>213</sup> with that which invigorates them, and their states become bewildered.<sup>214</sup>

‘*And bow with those that bow*, following the traditions of the pious forefathers (*salaf*) in what they used to do, avoiding the practice of isolation, for being in a dense congregation (*ghumār*)<sup>215</sup> is sounder than being separated from people’.

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<sup>211</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the verse to ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 112), as does Lane (vol. 1, p. 1454).

<sup>212</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse elsewhere (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 92).

<sup>213</sup> The translations follows “those who seek” (*al-murīdūn*) from MSS K117, f. 11a and Y101, f. 15a.

<sup>214</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been filled in with what could be read as “their states are bewildered” (*tatahayyaru aḥwāl*) from MS K117, f. 11a.

<sup>215</sup> In his article on the word *ghumār*, Lane references a *ḥadīth*, “I shall be among the dense congregation of the people” (*akūnu fī ghumāri’l-nās*), which al-Qushayrī probably has in mind here (Lane, 2:2292).

[2:44] *Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not understand?*

‘Will you rouse others to be foremost while you are content to lag behind?’ It is also said, ‘Will you call created beings to Us while you hang back from Us? Will you give drink<sup>216</sup> to the delegations while you yourselves hold back from the water? Will you vie with others, arguing with them over the particulars of the circumstances, content, in your bankruptcy, with externals’?

It is said, ‘Do you look to the weight of a speck or the measure of a grain in people,<sup>217</sup> while you tolerate<sup>218</sup> the mounds of sand and mountains in yourselves?’ The one who spoke for them said:

*Do you look  
to the mote in my eye  
when you do not see  
the beam in your own?*<sup>219</sup>

It is also said, ‘Do you give the choicest drink while you do not drink in turn?’

‘**While you recite the Book?** Then you persist obstinately with clandestine claims, denying the shameful thoughts (*faḍīḥāt al-khawāṭir*) and the plain driving cries [to blameworthy things] (*ṣarīḥāt al-zawājir*)<sup>220</sup> hidden in your hearts. **Do you not understand** that these are blameworthy qualities (*dhamīm<sup>unn</sup> min al-khiṣāl*) and ugly acts (*qabīḥ<sup>unn</sup> min al-ʿāl*)?’

[2:45] *Seek help in patience and prayer. For it is grievous, except to the humble,*

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<sup>216</sup> The translation replaces the word *tusarriḥūna* in Basyūnī with *tusharribūna* from MSS K117, f. 11a and Y101, f. 15a.

<sup>217</sup> The translation replaces the word *al-ḥaqq* in Basyūnī with the word *al-khalq* from MSS K117, f. 11a and Y101, f. 15a.

<sup>218</sup> The translation replaces the word *tusāhimūna* in Basyūnī with the word *tusāmiḥūna* from MSS K117, f. 11a and Y101, f. 15a.

<sup>219</sup> Muṣṭafā gives no other source for this poem other than al-Qushayrī (no. 14, p. 61).

<sup>220</sup> See the footnote on the words *zajr* and *zawājir* in the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:23-4 above.

Patience weans the soul from familiar things and prayer is turning one's attention to obtaining intimate communications. Patience indicates fleeing from any other [than God] and prayer indicates perpetual standing in the presence of the Unseen. Seeking help by the two of them takes a great deal of rigor unless the Real self-discloses to the heart of someone, for in the transmitted tradition [it says], 'Truly when God Most High self-discloses to something, it becomes humble to Him'.<sup>221</sup> When the Real self-discloses He lightens and makes easy what creatures must take on.<sup>222</sup> This is because continual acts of obedience cause burdens which must be endured, whereas the self-disclosure by witnessings through realization brings about the perfection of communion (*tamām al-wuṣṣa*) and perpetual nearness (*dawām al-zulfa*).

It is said, 'Seek help through Me for patience with Me, and seek help in My preserving for you your prayer for Me so that the incomings (*wāridāt*)<sup>223</sup> of unveiling and awe will not overwhelm you so much that you will be unable to perform service'. Surely it is a great blessing from the Real when there is a lessening of the onslaughts of ecstatic finding (*saṭawāt al-wujūd*) upon the heart at the time of unveiling, so that the servant is able to perform the precepts of separation.<sup>224</sup>

There are several kinds of patience, all of them praiseworthy. There is patience in God, patience for God, patience through God, and patience with God. There is only one type of patience which is not praiseworthy and that is the type of patience which keeps one from God.

*Patience is beautiful  
in all abodes  
except in resisting you,  
for then it is blameworthy.*<sup>225</sup>

**[2:46] who reckon (yaḏunnūna) that they shall meet their Lord, and that to Him they are returning.**

<sup>221</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives the *Sunan* of al-Nasā'ī (3:145), al-Dāraqutnī (2:65) and al-Bahaqī (333:3) as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>222</sup> The translation follows the word *tawallā* from MSS 117 f. 11a and Y101, f. 15a rather than the word *tawaqqā* in the Basyūnī text.

<sup>223</sup> In a section entitled 'The Incoming' (*al-wārid*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī describes *wāridāt* as thoughts, feelings or experiences that come without invitation to the heart (vol. 1, p. 245).

<sup>224</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses the term 'separation' (*farq*) to refer to the acts performed by the servant, in contrast to what comes from God, which is a gathering (*jam*). See the section on 'Gathering and Separation' (*al-jam ' wa 'l-farq*) in his *Risāla*, (vol. 1, pp. 207-8).

<sup>225</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse is attributed to al-'Utbā Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya b. 'Amr b. 'Utbā b. Abī Sufyān, who is said to have recited it when his son died. Among others to whom it is attributed are Abū Tammām and al-Shiblī (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 104). Al-Qushayrī cites a slightly different version of the verse in the 'Section on Patience' (*bāb al-ṣabr*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 399).

It is said that the word ‘to think’ (*ẓann*) is used here to mean ‘certainty’ (*yaqīn*), which would be the most obvious [meaning].<sup>226</sup> What is meant by it is ‘reckoning’ (*ḥusbān*). Those who reckon with the reckoning of certainty (*ẓanna ẓann al-yaqīn*) are those who experience communion. Those who reckon by the reckoning of guessing (*ẓanna ẓann al-takhmīn*) are those who experience separation.

[The phrase] *they shall meet their Lord (mulāqū rabbihim)* is in a grammatical form appropriate for the past, present and future. Because the folk<sup>227</sup> have recognized the truth of what shall be according to the decrees of the Unseen, they have reached the point where it is as if the promise has already been determined for them and the Unseen is present for them.

*[2:47] O Children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you, and that I have preferred you above all the worlds;*

He called the Children of Israel to bear witness to the favor or bounty (*faḍl*) granted to them, saying: *and that I have preferred you (faḍḍaltukum) above all the worlds*. He called the Muslims from the community of Muḥammad (s) to bear witness to the favor or bounty (*faḍl*) of God Himself, saying: *Say: ‘In the bounty (faḍl) of God, and in His mercy in that let them rejoice’* [10:58]. What a difference between those who bear witness to the favor or bounty (*faḍl*) they receive and those who bear witness to the bounty (*faḍl*) of their Lord Himself! The servant’s acknowledgment of the favor (*faḍl*) granted him implies gratitude, but with the danger of self-conceit (*i’jāb*). [On the other hand], the servant’s acknowledgement of the bounty (*faḍl*) of the Real – the One Whose majesty is in His description and His beauty in the worthiness of His attribute – involves praise, which leads to affirmation (*ījāb*).<sup>228</sup>

*[2:48] and fear the day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted from it; nor any compensation (‘adl) be taken, neither shall they be helped.*

He causes fear in ordinary people by His acts: *fear the day* and *fear the fire* [2:24, 3:131]. But He causes fear in the elect by His attributes, for He said, ‘*And say: “Act, for God will surely see your actions, and [so will] His Messenger”*’ [9:105], and He said, ‘*And you are not occupied with any business...but We are witnesses over you when you are engaged therein*’

<sup>226</sup> Here al-Qushayrī is referencing *tafsīr* works such as al-Ṭabarī’s that explain how *ẓann*, which usually implies doubt, can sometimes mean reckoning or certainty (Al-Ṭabarī, vol. 1, p. 262; J. Cooper translation, p. 287).

<sup>227</sup> Basyūnī explains in a footnote that al-Qushayrī means the Sufīs here.

<sup>228</sup> Notice al-Qushayrī’s play on two similar sounding words: *i’jāb* and *ījāb*.

[10:61]. He causes fear in the elect of the elect by Himself, for He said, ‘*God warns you of His Self*’ [3:28, 3:30].

[The word] ‘compensation’ (‘*adl*’) [here] means ‘ransom’ (*fidā*).

On the Day of the Resurrection no intercession will be heard except for the one whom the Real has commanded to intercede for Him. He has permitted it and He, in actuality, is the greatest intercessor even though the term ‘intercessor’ is not applied to Him because it is without [divine] instruction (*tawqīf*).<sup>229</sup> It is said about it:

*Praise be to God  
in gratitude,  
for everything good  
is with Him.*

*The lover has become  
my intercessor  
to my intercessor  
to Him.*<sup>230</sup>

The intercession of intercessors will not benefit those who have been hit by the calamity of fate. There will be no helpers for them, nor ransom accepted from them, even if they had the fill of the heavens and earths.

**[2:49] *And when We delivered you from the folk of Pharaoh who were visiting you with evil chastisement, slaughtering your sons, and sparing your women; and for you therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.***

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<sup>229</sup> Like other Ash‘arites, al-Qushayrī considered it unacceptable to use words to describe God other than the words used to describe Him in the Qur‘ān and sound *ḥādīths*.

<sup>230</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes the verse in a somewhat different version to al-Buḥṭarī, with ‘amir’ instead of ‘lover’ (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 120). The translation follows MSS 117 f. 11b and Y101, f. 15b here, with ‘my’ added to ‘intercessor’ in two places. This is how the verse appears in other versions located by Muṣṭafā.

Whoever has patience in God with the affliction of His enemies, God will compensate him with the companionship of His friends and He will grant him His beautiful gift. The Children of Israel were patient in enduring injury from Pharaoh and his people, so He appointed their prophets from among them and made them kings. He gave them what He had not given anyone in all the worlds.

***And for you therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord:*** It is said [it was] a great blessing and a severe trial. In truth, what was from God was externally a trial but it was really, for the one who recognized it, a blessing and a kindness.

***[2:50] When We divided for you the sea, and We delivered you, and drowned Pharaoh's folk, while you were beholding.***

The perceptive faculties (*baṣā'ir*) of the Children of Israel had become diminished, so He showed them miracles openly (*'ayānan*), whereas the perceptive faculties of this community were sharp, so He unveiled His signs secretly (*sirran*) to them. This is how His (*s*) way (*sunna*) goes. For those who are sharper in the perceptive faculty, the affair will be more subtle for them and the allusions with it more abundant. [The Prophet] (*ṣ*) said, **'I was given the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmi' al-kalim*) and then the speech (*kalām*) was shortened for me'**.<sup>231</sup>

When they saw these manifest signs in the splitting of the sea and the drowning of the people of Pharaoh, they were seized with doubt, and said, 'They did not drown even though they were cast into the sea', but the Children of Israel *did* see them drowning. On the other hand, this community, because of their being foremost<sup>232</sup> in their belief in the Messenger of God (*ṣ*) and because of the power of their perceptive faculties, [had] one youth [who] said, **'It is as if I was with the people of the Garden exchanging visits, and as if I was with the people of the Fire clamoring to one another, and as if I saw the throne of my Lord in plain sight'**.<sup>233</sup> What a difference between one who sees with his own eyes yet doubts, and one who learns by hearsay and yet it is like eye-witnessing for him because of the power of his belief!

***[2:51] And when We appointed for Moses forty nights, then you took to yourselves the Calf after him, and you were evildoers.***

<sup>231</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives Muslim, *Al-Masājid*, 7:8 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 2:250, 2:314, 2:442, 2:501) among other sources for this *ḥadīth*. Al-Qushayrī also cites the *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:1 above.

<sup>232</sup> The translation follows *li-farṭ* in MSS K117, f. 11b and Y101, f. 16a rather than the word *lafṭ* or *li-faẓṣ* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>233</sup> Al-Qushayrī cites a more complete version of this *ḥadīth* in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:4 above. 'Abd al-Raḥmān cites a few sources for the *ḥadīth*, including al-'Uqaylī's *Kitāb al-ḍu'afā' al-kabīr*, 4:455.

What a difference between one community and another! The community of Moses (‘a) had their prophet withdraw [from them] for forty days and they took the calf as their object of worship and were pleased with that. They said, ‘*This is your God and the God of Moses: so [Moses] forgot*’ [20:88]. [On the other hand], the community of Muḥammad the Chosen (ṣ) spent many years with their prophet. If they had heard anyone mention some form of [material] comparison to describe what they worshipped, they would not have spared their last breaths and would have given up their spirits.

It is said Moses (ṣ) entrusted his community to his brother, saying, ‘*Take my place with my people*’ [7:142]. When he returned he found they had fallen into temptation (*fitna*). Our Prophet (ṣ) relied on God and did not suggest anyone to lead the community. At the end of his life, he was saying ‘the highest companions’.<sup>234</sup> See how the Real attended to the care of [Muḥammad’s] community in preserving their monotheism. By my life, they may forfeit their [territorial] borders but they will not compromise their declaration of God’s unity (*tawḥīd*).

**[2:52] *Then We pardoned you after that so that you might be thankful.***

The quickness in pardoning such a grave sin indicates the lesser weight of those being pardoned. God Most High’s words testify to that [in addressing the wives of the Prophet], ‘*Whoever of you commits manifest indecency the chastisement shall be doubled for her*’ [33:30]. The Children of Israel worshiped the calf so God Most High said, ‘***Then We pardoned you after that***’. To the community [of Muḥammad (ṣ)] He said, ‘*and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil shall see it*’ [99:8].

**[2:53] *And when We gave to Moses the Scripture and the Criterion, so that you might be guided.***

The Criterion with which this community is distinguished is a light in their hearts by which they differentiate between the truth and falsehood. The Prophet (ṣ) said to Wābiṣa, ‘**Seek a**

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<sup>234</sup> This is a reference to a *ḥadīth* from ‘Ā’isha, who related that, on his death bed, the Prophet was given the choice between continuing his life in this world and what was with God. He answered, ‘**Nay, the highest companions (rafiq al-‘alā) in Paradise**’, echoing Qur’ānic verse 4:69: *What fine companions they are! (wa ḥasuna ūlā’ika raḥīqan)*. The *ḥadīth* and Qur’ānic verse are mentioned in Lane in his comments on the word *rafiq* (vol. 1, p. 1126). Since al-Qushayrī understands the ‘highest companions’ to be the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs (see his commentary on 4:69), he would seem to be suggesting here that the Prophet preferred his community as a whole rather than a specific leader to succeed him.



pronouncement (*fatwa*) from your heart'.<sup>235</sup> And he said, 'Fear the perspicacity (*firāsa*) of the believer, for he sees with the light of God'.<sup>236</sup> And God Most High said, *If you fear God, He will grant you a Criterion* [8:29] and that Criterion is a legacy for what they have put forward in beautiful works.

[2:54] *And when Moses said to his people, 'My people you have done wrong against yourselves by your taking the [golden] calf;*

i.e., 'you have not caused harm to anyone but yourselves with the sins you perpetrated'. As for the Real (*s*), He is exalted in description. None of the wrong of the wrongdoers can be referred back to His exaltedness. Whoever acts in conformity with his caprice and follows his objects of desire, his calf is whatever he is intent upon and whatever he singles out as his objective.

[2:54 cont'd] *now turn to your Creator*

The allusion is to the true sense of repentance in abandoning oneself entirely to (*khurūj ilā*) God.

[2:54 cont'd] *and slay one another;*

Repentance by slaying oneself has not been abrogated, but the Children of Israel's slaying of themselves was overt while this community's repentance by slaying themselves is in killing themselves inwardly, since the first step in seeking God is to abandon (*khurūj 'an*) the lower self.

[Section] Verily the people imagined that the repentance of the Children of Israel was more difficult but it is not as they imagine, for that was the suffering of slaying one time. As for the elect in this community, there is a slaying in every moment. Because of this:

*One who has died and found rest  
is not really dead.*

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<sup>235</sup> Basyūnī provides a footnote stating that the *ḥadīth* is related in Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī (in his *Tarīkh*), and al-Dārimī. He gives another version from al-Nawawī's *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥin*: 'Seek your own pronouncement, even if the pronouncers make pronouncements for you'.

<sup>236</sup> Basyūnī provides a footnote stating that the *ḥadīth* is related in al-Tirmidhī and al-Ṭabarānī.

*The only real dead are those*

*who are dead among the living.*<sup>237</sup>

Slaying the soul in truth is declaring it free of strength and power, or of bearing witness to anything from it. It is rejecting its claim, confusing its attempts at self-management, submitting all of its affairs to the Real (s), stripping it of its free choice and will, and obliterating the vestiges (*athār*) of the human from it. As for the remaining traces (*rusūm*) and skeletal structures (*hayākil*),<sup>238</sup> there is no danger or concern in them.

[2:54 cont'd] *That will be better for you in your Creator's sight'; He will turn to you [relenting]; truly He is the Relenting, the Merciful.*

‘His being for you against yourselves is more perfect than your being for yourselves’.

[2:55] *And when you said, ‘O Moses, we will not believe you till we see God openly’; and the thunderbolt took you, while you were beholding.*

Demanding to see the Essence without divine blessing is an open act of sacrilege, which is one of the signs of distance and misery, whereas to attest to the attribute of [divine] governing in the unveilings of might as linked to the kindnesses of nearness is one of the marks of communion and the tokens of felicity.

Surely when they spoke from ignorance, intensifying the lack of bashfulness [before the divine], the convulsion and the thunderbolt blast overtook them.

[2:56] *Then We raised you up after you were dead, so that you might be thankful.*

He returned them to sensory awareness after the blows of punishment overwhelmed them in order to fulfill the decree for them, and to implement [God's] way of pardoning sin. One of the aspects of generosity is to lower the veil over the defects of servants.

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<sup>237</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes this verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs and another individual (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p. 22). Al-Qushayrī recites the same verse in the section on ‘The Moment’ (*al-waqt*) in his *Riṣāla* (vol. 1, p. 190).

<sup>238</sup> These terms are ones Sufi writers adapted from early Arabic poetry, as Michael Sells has discussed in his *Early Islamic Mysticism* (pp. 56-74 and note 43, p. 338).

[2:57] *And We made the cloud overshadow you; and We sent down upon you manna and quails: 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you'; And they did not wrong Us, but themselves they wronged.*

When He banished them to the desolate regions of exile, He desired only to shade them and to cover them with sufficient clothing. He freed them from the trouble of having to work for themselves, favoring them by taking care of what they needed. Their hair and nails were not growing longer, their clothes were not becoming dirty, and the rays of the sun did not beat down on them. Similarly this is His way with someone when He has come between him and his free choice. What He (s) chooses for him will be better for him than what he chooses for himself.

[2:58] *And when We said, 'Enter this city, and eat freely therein wherever you will, and enter it at the gate prostrating, and say, 'exoneration', and We shall forgive you your transgressions and We shall give more to those who are virtuous'.*

The Children of Israel persisted<sup>239</sup> in neglecting that which they were commanded to do, to the point where they were entrusted with speech to preserve but they altered it, and they were commanded [to take] a position of prostration upon entering [the city] but they changed it.<sup>240</sup> They exposed themselves to the arrows of the Unseen and then were not able to withstand the injury of their strikes (*al-iṣābat bi-qar ihā*). They were exposed to unexpected punishments and could not hold up to the blows of their impact (*ṣadamāt waq ihā*).

[2:59] *Then the evildoers substituted a saying other than that which had been said to them; so We sent down upon the evildoers wrath from the heaven for their wickedness.*

They could neither ward off the opening of heaven above them with their stratagems, nor avert the cords of affliction below them by relying on their usual states. They gnashed the teeth of remorse<sup>241</sup> when the dog-teeth of pain<sup>242</sup> bit them. But how could this have benefited them when the situation was hopeless?

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<sup>239</sup> The blank in the Basyūnī text here has been completed with the word 'persisted' (*aṣarra*) from MSS K117, f. 12b and Y101, f. 16b.

<sup>240</sup> i.e., they were told to say 'exoneration' (*hiṭṭa*) and to prostrate, but they said something else and entered the city without prostrating, as described in the commentary transmitted in al-Ṭabarī (vol. 1, pp. 299-306; Cooper translation, pp. 334-7).

<sup>241</sup> The translation follows the phrase *qara 'ū sinn al-nadam* as it appears in MSS K117, f. 12b and Y101, f. 16b.

<sup>242</sup> Lane notes that dog-teeth or 'fangs' are 'metaphorically assigned to evil, or mischief' (vol. 2, p. 2870)

**[2:60] *And when Moses sought water for his people, We said, ‘Strike with your staff the rock,’ and there exploded from it twelve fountains, each people came to know their drinking-place, ‘Eat and drink of that which God has provided, and do not be degenerate in the earth, seeking corruption’.***

One who is capable of extracting water from solid rock is capable of quenching thirst without water. But He made the trace or effect (*athar*) of the miracle manifest in [Moses] and connected the locus (*maḥall*) of calling for help to him. He had Moses himself engaged in moving the stone, and entrusted him with striking with his staff. This was so that there would be a measure of [human] effort involved in making His decree come to pass in [Moses’s] seeking water for his people. Then the Real (*s*) wanted each people to follow a way, sticking to their boundary, and not disputing with their companions. So He singled out for each tribe a marker by which they would know their drinking-place, so that they would not go each others’ drinking-places. When He had met their needs, He bid them to be grateful, to preserve the command, and to stop choosing sin, so He said, ***‘and do not be degenerate in the earth, seeking corruption’.***

The drinking-places are different and each comes to their own, so one drinking-place is sweet and fresh, another salty and bitter, and another clear and pure, another closed up with only a few drops. The water carrier for each people leads them and the scout of each party drives them on, so the lower selves come to the watering-places of desires and cravings, the hearts come to the drinking-places of God-fearing and acts of obedience, the spirits come to the watering-places of unveiling and witnessing, and the innermost selves come to the watering-places of realities, snatched from the being and outward markings (*al-kawn wa’l-marsūmāt*) [of humans], then from the sensory awareness and attributes (*al-iḥsās wa’l-ṣifāt*) [of humans], then annihilated in the reality of ecstatic finding and essence (*al-wujūd wa’l-dhāt*).

**[2:61] *And when you said, ‘Moses, we will not endure one sort of food; pray to your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces – green herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, onions’; He said, ‘Would you exchange what is better with what is lowlier?’ ‘Go down to a city, you shall have what you demanded’; And abasement, and wretchedness were cast upon them, and they incurred God’s wrath; that was because they used to disbelieve the signs of God and slay prophets without right; that was because they disobeyed, and they were transgressors.***

They were not content with the goodness of His choosing for them, nor were they patient in His managing what He was intending for them in basic food and clothing. In their confusion, they fell back to their customary behavior in eating contemptible food and being content with a lower state, so He returned them to the suffering of ignominy (*muqāsāt al-hawān*) and bound them to perpetual disappointment (*idāmat al-khidhlān*). They went so far as to shed the

blood of prophets and violated the sanctity of the affair with their lack of shame. They did not repent, so He punished them for their ugly acts (*qabīh fi 'ālihim*) and returned them to what He had chosen for their souls in their contemptible states (*khasā'is aḥwālihim*). When sincere counsel (*naṣīḥa*) did not succeed with them, retribution and humiliation (*faḍīḥa*) overtook them.

It is said the Children of Israel were divided in their aspirations, scattered in their objectives. They were not content to have just one food for themselves, nor were they satisfied with one object of worship in their religion, to the point where they said to Moses (‘a), when they saw people worshipping idols, ‘O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods’ [7:138]. This is the attribute of the people of separation. Patience with the One (*al-wāḥid*) is hard. God Most High said, ‘And when you mention the Lord alone (*waḥdahu*) in the *Qur’ān*, they turn their backs in aversion’ [17:46].

**[2:62] Surely those who believe, and those of Jewry, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and performs righteous deeds – their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.**

The diversity of [religious] paths<sup>243</sup> in spite of the unity of the source does not prevent a goodly acceptance [for all]. For anyone who affirms the Real (*s*) in His signs and believes in what He has told concerning His Truth and Attributes, the dissimilarity of [religious] laws and diversity occurring in name[s] is not a problem in considering who merits [God’s] good pleasure. Because of that He said, ‘**Surely those who believe and those of Jewry**’. Then He said, ‘**whoever believes**’, meaning if they fear [God] in the different ways of knowing [Him], all of them will have a beautiful place of return and an ample reward. The believer (*mu’min*) is anyone who is in the protection (*amān*) of the Real (*s*). For anyone who is in His protection, it is fitting that **no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve**.

**[2:63-4] And when We made a covenant for you, and We raised above you the Mount, ‘Take forcefully what We have given you, and remember what is in it so that you might preserve yourselves’. \* Then you turned away thereafter, and but for God’s bounty and His mercy towards you, you would have been among the losers.**

He (*s*) made a covenant with all responsible beings (*mukallaḥūn*),<sup>244</sup> but some responded willingly because He made Himself known to them, so they declared His unity. Other people responded unwillingly because He veiled them, so they did not want to recognize Him. There is no proof more powerful than the eye-witnessing of the Mount (*ṭūr*) He raised above them, which was a mountain (*jabal*), but they lacked the light of the perceptive faculty (*baṣīra*) and so the witnessing of physical vision (*baṣar*) did not benefit them.

<sup>243</sup> The translation follows the word ‘paths’ (*ṭuruq*) from MS Y101, f. 17a. rather than the word ‘path’ (*ṭarīq*) in the Basyūnī edition or the word ‘thought’ (*ẓann*) in MS K117, f. 12b.

<sup>244</sup> In Islamic law, this is a term used to describe those who are adult and sane, and therefore bound to follow the Sharī‘a.

***Then you turned away thereafter***, i.e. you returned to disobedience after witnessing the signs with your own eyes. If not for His decree in granting respite and His forbearance in acts of grace, He would punish you without delay and cause a great misfortune to descend upon you, and your transaction would be entirely a loss.

***[2:65] And verily you know that there were those among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them, ‘Be apes, despised!’***

The metamorphosis (*maskh*) of [Muḥammad’s] community occurred in the hearts. When [the Children of Israel] abandoned [God’s] command and disdained what was imposed on them from the law, the punishments came quickly in their disgrace, metamorphosis, and the other things which are included in the text. In a similar way, the community [of Muḥammad] was punished because of their violation of the Covenant and rejection of the limit [imposed by God], but [their punishment] was in the metamorphosis of their hearts and the alteration of their states. [God] Most High said, ‘*And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes; just as they did not believe the first time*’ [6:110]. The punishments of hearts are far worse than the punishments of the bodily selves. About this they have recited:

*O you who ask me,*

*‘How have you been after him?’*

*I suffered that which tormented me,*

*while it made him happy.*

*I kept strutting about*

*in our togetherness*

*and felt safe from*

*the ruses of time.*

*But the turning away from me*

*went on until*

*not a bit of what I had*

*experienced remained.*<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Muṣṭafā notes that these verses appear unattributed in a slightly different version in al-Qushayrī’s *Sharḥ al-asmā’* (Muṣṭafā, no. 53, p. 71).

[2:66] *And We made it an exemplary punishment for all the former times and for the latter, and an admonition to such as who fear.*

Thus the states of those who were tried by abandonment (*muniyā bi'l-hijrān*) and branded with disappointment (*wusima bi'l-khidhlān*) became a lesson – to look at what happened to them is to choke on grief. The one who is reduced to misery after having had status becomes an object of scorn before every low-life. This is what remains for those who have been brought low after the wrath of kings and the shunning of chieftains:

*The youths surrounded*

*and ganged up on me.*

*From behind,*

*they called the dogs on me.*<sup>246</sup>

[2:67] *And when Moses said to his people, ‘God commands you to sacrifice a cow’...*

It was obligatory for them to meet the command head on, but they wasted time with external appearances, imagining that they had the leisure to linger in their digression from the covenant obligation. So the misery was doubled for them and the ignominy they had been warned about overtook them.

[Section] When He said: ‘...*She is a cow neither old, nor virgin, middling between the two...*’

[2:68], it meant she would be neither young nor aged but somewhere between the two. The allusion is to the fact that one who is suited for this path (*tarīqa*) is one who is neither attracted by the impetuosity of youth and its drunkenness, nor paralyzed by the weakness and frailty of old age. Rather he is alert, having regained consciousness from his drunkenness yet retaining some of the vigor of his youth.

[2:69-70] ‘...*a golden cow, bright in color, gladdening to beholders*’. \* *They said, ‘Pray to your Lord for us, that He make clear to us what she may be; the cows are all alike to us; and if God wills, we shall then be guided’.*

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<sup>246</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Majnūn in the *Diwān* (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p. 122).

Just as her [bright] color would have been perceived by the eyes, the allusion here is to those of the People of the Story (*ahl al-qisṣa*)<sup>247</sup> whose witnessing<sup>248</sup> overwhelms the hearts [of others] because of that which is clothed with the garment of invincibility (*jabarūt*) and made to rise from the witness of the Unseen. One notices such a one has become oblivious to human states and has been taken over by the remembrance of the Real. Thus, in the transmitted tradition: *The saints of God are those who, when they are seen, God is remembered.*<sup>249</sup>

*[2:71] He said, 'He says she shall be a cow not broken to plough the earth, or to water the tillage, with no blemish on her'. They said, 'Now you have brought the truth'; and so they sacrificed her, even though they very nearly did not.*

Just as this cow was not to have been broken in for work, nor worn out for the purposes of profits, there was to be no color in her inconsistent with the overall grandeur of her color. The allusion in it is to the people of divine friendship (*walāya*) who have not exerted themselves with others in order to obtain what they seek through causes, and who have not relied in their hearts on external appearances and simulacra. They have not trusted in their own choosing and contrivance. They are not prey to the claims of desire, nor game in the claws of the present world. Carnal desires do not rule them and no human authority controls them. They have not striven at all to obtain what they desire and are not concerned with attaining what they wish for. There is no mark of others upon them, nor any sign of causes, for they are supported by God, annihilated from all else, nay, effaced as God turns them this way and that. God has conquered their hearts. Just as their object of worship is God, so their only aim is God. Just as their aim is God, so what they bear witness to is God and what they have found is God. Nay, they are effaced in God and [only] God remains after them.<sup>250</sup> The one who spoke for them recited:

*If you want me to be pleased*

*and you to be pleased*

*and to take the reins*

*of our life together,*

<sup>247</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote saying that what is meant here is the Sufis.

<sup>248</sup> The translation follows the word 'witnessing' (*mushāhada*) in MSS K117, f. 13a and Y101, f. 17b rather than the word 'witness' (*shāhid*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>249</sup> The translation follows 'they are seen' (*ru'ū*) from MSS K117, f. 13a and Y101, f. 17b over Basyūnī's 'they see' (*ra'aw*). In his *Self-Disclosure of God*, Chittick locates the *ḥadīth* with the passive form of the verb in Ibn Maja, Zuhd 4 (Chittick, p. 442). 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Albānī's *Al-Silsila al-Ṣaḥīḥa*, 1733, as a reference.

<sup>250</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a blank here: *wa.... 'anhum Allāh. Al-khalaf* has been inserted on the basis of MSS K117, f. 13a and Y101, f. 18a.



*then look at the world*  
*through my eyes*  
*and listen with my ears*  
*and speak with my tongue.*<sup>251</sup>

[2:71 cont'd] *They said, 'Now you have brought the truth'; and so they sacrificed her, even though they very nearly did not.*

They sought a stratagem for themselves, but when their stratagems failed, they submitted to the decree and were rid of the difficulties of the demands. If they had done what they were commanded to do [straight away], the misery would not have been doubled for them.

[2:72] *And when you killed a living soul, and disputed thereon – and God disclosed what you were hiding,*

One who is disloyal is afraid and, out of fear that his secret will become manifest, relies on concealment, deception, denial and evasion. His fault (*'awāruhu*) is inevitably discovered, his secrets (*asrāruhu*) exposed, and the coverings (*astāruhu*) fall from the shame of his action. God Most High said, '*and God disclosed what you were hiding*'.

[2:73] *so We said, 'Smite him with part of it'; God brings to life the dead, and He shows you His signs so that you might understand.*

Allah (s) wanted to give life to the dead man so that he could expose his killer through the testimony [of the slain], so He commanded them to kill one of their animals, making it the cause of bringing the slain man to life.<sup>252</sup> The allusion in it is that anyone who desires the life of his heart will only attain it by sacrificing his lower self, since the heart of anyone who sacrifices his lower self by difficult efforts (*mujāhadāt*) comes to life by the lights of witnessing (*mushāhadāt*). Likewise, when God wants someone's reputation to live forever,<sup>253</sup> He causes his reputation in this world to pass into obscurity.

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<sup>251</sup> Muṣṭafā gives no sources for these verses (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 113).

<sup>252</sup> The *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī transmits commentary with additional details of this story about a man killed by one of the Children of Israel. After God revealed to them to smite the murdered man with part of the sacrificed cow, the man came to life and identified his murderer (*Al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1, pp. 356-61; Cooper trans. pp. 391-5).

<sup>253</sup> The translation follows the word 'forever' (*al-abad*) from MSS K117, f. 13 and Y101, f. 18a. The Basyūnī edition has *al-abdāl*, but Basyūnī adds a footnote suggesting the word is probably *al-abad*.

**[2:74] *Then your hearts became hardened thereafter, or even yet harder; for there are stones from which rivers come gushing, and others split so that water issues from them; and others come down in fear of God; And God is not heedless of what you do.***

He explained that even though they witnessed weighty signs and had seen clear proofs, when [divine] solicitude did not help them and God did not create guidance for them, the many signs only increased their hardness and brought misery upon misery for them from the hiding places of the [divine] preordination. He compared their hearts to stones because [stones] do not grow or thrive, and their hearts likewise do not understand and are not aware.<sup>254</sup> Then He explained that [their hearts] are even harder than stones, ***for there are stones from which rivers come gushing*** and upon which the traces of the fear of God appear.<sup>255</sup> But their hearts are empty of all good. How can it not be so when [their hearts] were made to suffer the turning of the Real from them (*muniyat bi-i 'rāḍi 'l-ḥaqq minhā*) and were singled out for the removal of all good from them (*khuṣṣat bi-intizā 'i 'l-khayrāt minhā*).

**[2:75] *Are you then so eager that they should believe you, seeing there is a party of them that heard God's word, and then tampered with it (yuḥarrifūnahu), and that, after they had comprehended it knowingly?***

He informed them of [the status] of their belief and related that after hearing the address of God (*s*), they engaged in tampering and altering. 'Why would they believe you when they already heard by means of the message? How can those who do not remain in a state of faith after eye-witnessing ( *'iyān*) believe by means of demonstrative proof (*burhān*)? That which does not hold true for the Real does not hold true for you. How can those who are not ashamed before the Real be ashamed before you?'

**[2:76-7] *And when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe'; but when they go in private one to another, they say: 'Do you speak to them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they may thereby dispute with you before your Lord? Have you no understanding?' \* Know they not that God knows what they keep secret and what they proclaim?***

They encouraged one another amongst themselves to reject the Real and to hide the situation from the Muslims. But they did not know that God was informing His Messenger ( *'a*) of their

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<sup>254</sup> Basyūnī has *lā taghnī* but suggests it could be 'are not aware' (*lā ta 'ī*), which is what MSS K117, f. 13b and Y101, f. 18a have.

<sup>255</sup> Basyūnī suggests in a footnote that there is an allusion here to Qur'ānic verse 59:21: *Had We sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God.*

secrets, and that a light the Real<sup>256</sup> has made manifest is not extinguished by the efforts of any other than Him. When the tongue agrees but the mind<sup>257</sup> objects, it only increases separation.

**[2:78-9] *And there are some of them that are illiterate, not knowing the Scripture, but only desires and mere conjectures. \* So woe to those who write the Scripture with their hands then say, ‘This is from God’ that they may sell it for a small price.***

He related that they were different in the shortcomings of their disbelief. One group is the most contemptible,<sup>258</sup> while the majority relied on blind following (*taqlīd*) out of ignorance. It was not that doubt seized them but rather they were misled by conjecture and guessing. They have no share in their Scriptures except reciting them without knowledge of their meanings. Among this group are those who are mostly concerned with what they desire for themselves. There is no possibility of their being helped and no definitive way of finding the truth among their conjectures.

Then He related the bad outcome for them in His words, may His mention be exalted: **[2:79 cont’d] *So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings.***

It means they have lost in the present and in the end. The allusion in this verse is to those who lack sincerity (*ikhhlās*)<sup>259</sup> in companionship (*suḥba*)<sup>260</sup> on the path of the Real. They associate with the friends (*awlīyā*) externally but they possess no true spiritual desire (*irāda*), so they are companions with the heedless with only a partial view of this path. Whenever the clamor of worldly fortunes call, they rush to respond willingly but when the demands of the Real (*s*) direct them to some endeavor, their situation is a bad one since they are not sincere. How intense will be their remorse for what they have hoarded from God! They will not prosper.

**[2:80] *And they say, ‘the Fire shall not touch us, save a number of days’. Say: ‘Have you taken with God a covenant? God will not fail in His covenant, or say you against God what you do not know?’***

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<sup>256</sup> The translation follows the word ‘the Real’ (*al-ḥaqq*) found in MS K117, f. 13b rather than ‘the Unseen’ (*al-ghayb*) found in the Basyūnī edition and MS Y101, f. 18b.

<sup>257</sup> The word used here is usually translated as ‘creed’ or ‘dogmatic conviction’ (*‘aqīda*).

<sup>258</sup> Presumably this refers back to those who knowingly tampered with their Scriptures.

<sup>259</sup> For more on this term, see the ‘Section on Sincerity’ (*bāb al-ikhhlās*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 443-447).

<sup>260</sup> For more on this term, see the ‘Section on Companionship’ (*bāb al-ṣuḥba*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 574-580).

The allusion in this verse is to those who no longer have deep supplications in their hearts. Their conjecturing has gotten the better of them, for they judge themselves, out of extreme foolishness, to be among the People of the Story.<sup>261</sup> Such a one abides (*yakhlud*)<sup>262</sup> with the murmurings of his lower desires. He judges the Unseen by what he has himself neglected, having forgotten the ugliness of what he has done, and remembering [only] the errors of his false thinking. He is a servant of his lower self whose good opinion of himself has gotten the better of him. In reality, the results of his neglect and deceit have taken possession of him. God Most High said, ‘*And that supposition of yours which you supposed of your Lord has ruined you. So you have become among the losers*’ [41:23].

**[2:81] *Not so; whoever earns evil and is encompassed by his transgression — those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein abiding (khālīdūn).***

The one who *is encompassed by his transgression* is the disbeliever in the language of scholars.<sup>263</sup> But the allusion in it is to one whose heart has ceased its perpetual calling for help. The possessors of realities are like grain in the frying pan in their moments of wakefulness (*ṣaḥw*).<sup>264</sup> Those [of them] who have become still are thus because of His excessive majesty, not because they are listless.

Whoever relies on obedience seeks favor from it and thinks that he is drawing near by it, but he should be keeping his distance from this. Whoever has realized the declaration of oneness knows that there is no means to Him except through Him.

**[2:82] *And those who believe and perform righteous deeds — those are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein abiding.***

In the here and now there are the gardens of communion...<sup>265</sup>

<sup>261</sup> In a footnote, Basyūnī once again identifies these people as Sufis, as he does in the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:69-70 above.

<sup>262</sup> The verb ‘abides’ (*yakhlud*) anticipates the use of the verbal noun ‘abiding’ (*khālīdūn*) in the next Qur’ānic verse [2:81]. Al-Qushayrī understands the word ‘abiding’ as a description not only of the enduring nature of the punishment of the Fire, but also the enduring and painful state of separation from God in this life.

<sup>263</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote saying this means the language of ordinary *tafsīr* rather than allusive language.

<sup>264</sup> ‘Wakefulness’ is a term al-Qushayrī writes about in his *Risāla* in the section on ‘Wakefulness and Drunkenness’ (*al-ṣaḥw wa’l-sukr*) (vol. 1, pp. 217-9).

<sup>265</sup> There is a section missing from Basyūnī’s printed edition here, which amounts to about a half of a folio page in the MS K117, f.14a. Because there are problems with that text that could not be resolved with reference to the MS Y101, f.18b and f.19a, the translation here follows the Basyūnī text where it becomes complete again in the middle of the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:85.

[...]

**[2:85] *Then there you are killing one another, and expelling a party of you from their habitations, conspiring against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; yet their expulsion was forbidden you. What, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part?***

...and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, i.e., ‘just as you protect their rights by ransoming them, so must you restrain your hands from them and forswear expelling them from their homelands. When you uphold some of what has been made obligatory for you, what keeps you from doing the rest of what you have been commanded to do? Don’t you know that whoever differentiates in what he has been commanded, so that he believes in some parts and disbelieves in others has the reward for his deeds nullified because of what he has neglected?’

**[2:85 cont’d] *What shall be the requital of those of you who do that, but degradation in the life of this world; and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned to the most terrible of chastisement? And God is not heedless of what you do.***

i.e., they thought that what they did would benefit them but it was disclosed to them in the Hereafter that everything that they did, when they mixed it with what was damaging and stripped it of sincerity and devotedness, was not accepted from them.

The captives are of different types. The rescue of the captive drowning in the sea of caprice (*hawā*) is being directed to guidance. The ransom of the captive who remains in the hands of whisperings (*wasāwis*)<sup>266</sup> is to show him the way to certainty by the glimmers of proofs. Through this you will rescue him from doubt and questioning, and take him out of the darknesses of blind imitation (*taqlīd*). The redemption of the captive you find shackled to his random thoughts and enslaved by the clamor of his lower self is that you direct him to the witnessing of favors. [This is done] by his absolving himself of considering any power in a created thing or something other [than God]. The redemption of the captive you find tied to his error is to advise him to renounce it and to aid him in restraining himself from it.<sup>267</sup> The redemption of the captive you find shackled to his [human] attributes is to direct him towards the Real in what will release him from the fetter<sup>268</sup> of engendered existence (*kawn*). The captives you find in the grip of the Real, let them know that there is no redemption for such

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<sup>266</sup> See Qur’ānic verses 50:16 and 114:5 for mention of ‘whispering’ in the lower self (*nafs*) and breasts (*ṣudūr*) of human beings.

<sup>267</sup> This sentence does not appear in MS K117, f.14b. The translation follows the word ‘error’ (*ḡalla*) found in MS Y101, 19a rather than the word ‘essence’ or ‘self’ (*dhāt*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>268</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘shackle’ (*wathāq*) from MSS K117, f. 14b and Y101, 19a.

captives, no retaliation<sup>269</sup> for their dead, and no deliverance for their bond. [For aspirants on the path] there is no escape from them, no way to them, no stratagem other than them, no comfort with anything but them, and no rejecting their decree.

**[2:86] *Those are the ones who have purchased the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter — for them the punishment shall not be lightened, neither shall they be helped.***

Those who have preferred anything over Him have lost in this world and the Hereafter. As they have said:

*People turned away*

*from us*

*without cause*

*or sense.*

*If they have no need*

*of us,*

*we have even less need*

*of them.*<sup>270</sup>

**[2:87] *And We gave Moses the Scripture, and after him We sent successive messengers, and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and We confirmed him with the Holy Spirit, and whenever there came to you a messenger, with what your souls did not desire, you became arrogant; and some, you called liars, and some you slay?***

The allusion is ‘We delivered the address to them and made one messenger to follow after another, all calling to the same thing. But they listened to the call of the callers with the ear of caprice (*hawā*), accepting what the lower selves found pleasurable and rejecting what their whims (*ahwā*) found troublesome. They were characterized by this self-serving desire and moreover became servants (*‘abadū*) to it. The [human] attributes of the worshiper (*‘ābid*) became the object of worship (*ma ‘būd*)’. What a terrible affliction upon them!

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<sup>269</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘retaliation’ (*qawad*) from the MS K117, f. 14b and Y101, f. 19a rather than the word ‘return’ (*‘awd*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>270</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate these verses in any other source. However, he adds lines that do not appear in the Basyūnī edition, MS K117, f. 14b, or Y101, f. 19a (Muṣṭafā, no. 11, p. 24).

[2:88] *And they say: ‘Our hearts are encased’. Nay, but God has cursed them for their unbelief; and little will they believe.*

If there had been anything in them free of pretension, the finding of meanings would have become easy. But at the demands of recognizing the truth, the dog-teeth of pretenders are bared...<sup>271</sup> It is said:

*When tears flow  
down the cheeks  
the one who is crying is distinguished  
from the one who is only pretending.*<sup>272</sup>

[2:89] *When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them — and they formerly prayed for victory over the disbelievers; but when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the disbelievers.*

The allusion in it is to one who resolves upon purity and clarity (*ṣafāʾ*), and promises his complete loyalty (*wafāʾ*). He raises the banners of vigor in stepping out to combat, but when the call comes to line up and advance boldly into battle he breaks down at the rallying of the ranks and cuts himself off from the group, afraid of dangerous attacks.<sup>273</sup> God Most High said: *Then, when the matter has been resolved upon if they are loyal to God, it will be better for them* [47:21].

[2:90] *Evil is that for which they sell their souls; that they disbelieve in that which God has revealed, grudging that God should reveal of His bounty to whomever He will of His servants; and they were laden with anger upon anger; and for the disbelievers there shall be a humiliating chastisement.*

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<sup>271</sup> There is a blank section in Basyūnī’s edition which was not clarified by MSS K117, f. 14b and Y101, f. 19b. See footnote to the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:59 above for the metaphorical meaning of dog-teeth.

<sup>272</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Al-Mutanabbī (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, pp. 90-1). Al-Qushayrī cites this verse again in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:143.

<sup>273</sup> There are some problems with this sentence in Basyūnī’s text, which have been resolved here from the MSS K117, f. 14b and Y101, f. 19b.

Envy caused them to descend from the abode of nobility to the lowland of ignominy. When they were not satisfied with what the decree brought, they were reduced to a state of abasement. They invited upon themselves that which brought hatefulness upon hatefulness.

[2:91] *And when it was said to them, ‘Believe in what God has revealed’, they said, ‘We believe in what was revealed to us’, and they disbelieve in what is beyond that; yet it is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say: ‘Why then were you slaying the prophets of God formerly, if you were believers?’*

The allusion in it is that when it is said to them, ‘Recognize the truth of what has been shown to you from the decree of [divine] harmony (*min ḥukm al-wifāq*) through the recognition of the situation and the establishment of proof,’ their lower selves permit some of what they find ambiguous insofar as it agrees with their self-serving desires, and then *they disbelieve in what is beyond* their worldly concerns. They<sup>274</sup> are at a distance from the elite and are not considered to be among the group of those who have special claim (*arbāb al-ikhtisāṣ*).

[2:92] *And Moses came to you with clear proofs; then you took to yourselves the calf after him, and you were evildoers.*

i.e., ‘he called you to the declaration of unity (*tawḥīd*) and the separating of the [proper] object of worship from any other object of worship (*ma ‘būd*) and limited thing (*maḥdūd*). But you were not inclined to worship anything except what was becoming to you in the calf you adopted for yourselves and the idol you desired’. [The calf] was taken from them but its traces remained in their hearts and the hearts of those who came after them. Because of that most Jews believe in anthropomorphism (*tashbīḥ*).

[2:93] *And when We made a covenant with you, and raised over you the Mount, ‘Take forcefully what We have given you, and listen’, they said, ‘We hear and disobey’; and they were made to drink the calf in their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: ‘Evil is that which your belief enjoins on you, if you are believers’.*

He reiterates the telling of their excessive love for the calf, their aversion to accepting the Real, and [...],<sup>275</sup> and their being told of the punishment which would overtake them for the evil they did. No counsel was useful to them (*naja ‘a fīhim*) and no punishment led them to refrain from their disobediences (*iqlā ‘ahim ‘an ma ‘āṣihim*). They paid no mind to censure (*lā*

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<sup>274</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī printed edition in the first part of the sentence, which is completed here based on MSS K117, f. 14b and Y101, f. 19b.

<sup>275</sup> The blank in the Basyūnī text could not be clarified through the text in MS K117, f. 14b or Y101, f. 19b.



*bi'l-dhamm fihim ihtafalū*) and did not act according to what the situation required (*wa lā bi-mūjibi'l-amr 'amalū*).

[2:94-5] *Say: 'If the Abode of the Hereafter with God is purely yours, and not for other people, then long for death — if you speak truly'. \* But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them. God knows the evildoers.*

Among the signs of ardent longing (*ishtiyyāq*) is the desire for death on the carpet of health and well-being.<sup>276</sup> Whoever is absolutely and without any doubt confident that the Garden is his ardently longs for it. When they did not long for the Garden – and God (s) said that **they will never long for it** – this information became a miracle for the Messenger (s 'a) since it was as He said.

In this is good news for the believers who ardently long for death that there is forgiveness for them. He only bestows the ardent longing on them so that it may be actualized in the arrival in the Garden. Of old it was said, 'For the negligent, shame will suffice on the Day of the Meeting'.<sup>277</sup> God Most High said, '**But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them**'.

[2:96] *And you shall find them the people most covetous of life, and the idolaters; any one of them would love that he might be given life for a thousand years; yet, his being given life shall not budge him from the chastisement. God sees what they do.*

Love of life in this world is the result of heedlessness of God. The worst heedlessness is their excessive love for remaining in this world. The state of the believer is the opposite of this. The eagerness for life of those who are heedless and insolent is only because they know their failure in being obedient. The runaway slave does not want to be returned to his master. But for believers, the transition [of death] to One from Whom only good is expected is better than remaining with those against whose evil they are not secure. The prolonging of life in spite of the certainty of death holds no value for them since [death] comes unexpectedly and life is cut off. What is coming is near. When the life span is completed, there is no averting the assaults of the appointed time upon the shoulders of hope (*lā maradda li-hujūmi'l-ajal 'alā aktāfi'l-amal*).

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<sup>276</sup> In other words, such a one longs for death even when he is able to enjoy life in this world fully. Al-Qushayrī cites a similar statement attributed to his teacher Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq in the 'Section on Passionate Longing' (*bāb al-shawq*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 2, p. 628).

<sup>277</sup> Al-Qushayrī gives no indication here of what type of material he is quoting.

[2:97-8] *Say: ‘Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel — he it was that brought it down upon your heart by the leave of God, confirming what was before it, a guidance, and good tidings for the believers. \* Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael — then surely God is an enemy to the disbelievers’.*

The Jews claimed that Gabriel did not come with good, that they did not love him, and that if it had been Michael, they would have believed in him. The Real (s) showed them to be liars when He said, ‘*Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel* [thinking] he did not bring good, what good is greater than the Qur’ān that descended through him?’

Then He said that whoever is an enemy to Gabriel and Michael, God is his enemy. Surely the messenger of the Beloved to the highly esteemed beloved [Muḥammad] has a noble status and weighty rank. The enmity of the disbelievers does not harm Gabriel – the Real (swt) is his protector (walī). Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel, God is his enemy. How mighty and glorified is this status! How grand is his exaltedness!

[2:99-100] *And We have revealed to you clear proofs; and none disbelieves in them except the wicked. \* Why, whenever they make a covenant, does a party of them reject it? Nay, but most of them are disbelievers.*

One disbelieves in His clear signs only when one’s eyes are blocked from perceiving and one’s fate from God has already been determined as unfortunate. There is no sense in anyone who denies that day is day. Likewise, there is no union for anyone who has not been assisted by lights and insights from the Real.

*Why, whenever they made a covenant...:* their predetermined fate (*sābiq al-taqdīr*) was confounding them and their subsequent contriving (*lāḥiq al-tadbīr*) was breaking their covenant. God prevails over His affair.

[2:101] *When there came to them a messenger from God, confirming what was with them, a party of them who were given the Scripture have cast away the Scripture of God behind their backs, as though they did not know.*

They denied the messengers of the Real that came by means of intuitions to their hearts and belied the messengers who came to them outwardly. O ignorance in which there is not a sliver of knowledge (‘*irfān*)! O deprivation whose companion is disappointment (*khidhlān*)!

[2:102] *And they follow what the devils used to relate Solomon's kingdom: Solomon disbelieved not, but the devils disbelieved, teaching the people sorcery; and that which was revealed to the two angels in Babylon — Hārūt and Mārūt. They taught not any man, without them saying, 'We are but a temptation; do not disbelieve'. From them they learned how they might cause division between a man and his wife, yet they did not hurt any man thereby save by the leave of God; and they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them. And surely they knew well that whoever buys it, he shall have no share in the Hereafter;*

Whoever is divided by his whims falls into one state of heedlessness after another, so that every kind of ignorant affair welcomes him. Moreover, those whose absence is prolonged become a warning to others and a temptation for whoever follows their path. Whoever emulates them in their transgression joins their community and becomes one of them. This is the case in the description of Hārūt and Mārūt and what happened to them – they became a temptation and a warning for men. Their tribulation will be extended to whoever listens to what they say and does not take into account their ignorance. They will also share in the distress that afflicts them in the Hereafter.

The allusion in their story is to the one on this path (*tarīqa*) who is inclined to affectation, deception and putting forth counterfeit claims. He attracts followers whom he throws into Hell by his falsehood. He blocks them by the sparks of fire of his ignorance from the path of right direction. Whoever takes heed crosses over<sup>278</sup> to safety by its bridges (*qanātīrihi*).<sup>279</sup> Whoever becomes disgraced by his inclination to falsehoods (*abāṭīlihi*), torn<sup>280</sup> are his veils (*astāruhu*) and exposed to anyone with eyes is his fault (‘*awāruhu*). When Hārūt and Mārūt were deceived by the disobedience to which they had become accustomed, they blamed the disobedience of the children of Adam. Because of the tendencies toward carnal desires that became part of them, and the promptings to temptations and harmful things, they plunged forward into disobedience. What happened to them is what the storytellers relate: they are hanging upside down until the Day of the Resurrection and if not for [God's] gentleness (*rifq*) towards them and their affair, their punishment would not end then. But God's kindness (*lutf*) with all is abundant.

And when God Most High said: *And they learned what hurt them, and did not profit them*, people of discernment know that knowledge of things can be undesirable, even though [knowledge itself] is a praiseworthy attribute. The Prophet (ṣ) said, ‘*I seek refuge in You from knowledge that has no benefit*’.<sup>281</sup>

<sup>278</sup> Al-Qushayrī is playing here with two verb forms from the same root ‘*b-r*’: *i‘tabara* (‘to take heed or learn a lesson’) and ‘*abara*’ (‘to cross over’).

<sup>279</sup> These two sentences have been included on the basis of MS K117, f. 15a and MS Y101, f. 20a. Basyūnī has a blank in his version with a note saying that the writing was obscure in the script and meaning.

<sup>280</sup> Al-Qushayrī is playing here with two meanings of the verb *tahattaka*: ‘to be torn’ and ‘to be disgraced’.

<sup>281</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives Ṣaḥīb’s *Mizān al-i‘tidāl*, 4119, and al-Zabīdī’s *Ithāf al-sādāt* ‘l-muttaqīn, 1:227, as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

[2:102 cont'd] *evil then would have been that they sold themselves for, if they had but known.*

If the one who has been deceived were to know what endures (*mādhā abqā*) and what brings trial (*mādhā ablā*), he would be torn apart by sorrows. But *on the day when secrets are tested* [86:9] he will know the precious gifts that have passed him by.

[2:103] *Yet if only they had believed, and been fearful, verily, a reward from God would have been better, if they had but known.*

If they had only preferred drawing near (*iqbāl*) to God over being distracted (*istighāl*) from Him, they would have obtained the treasure of the two abodes and reached the majesty of the two worlds. But the blows of subjugation pressed upon them (*kasabathum saṭawātu 'l-qahr*), and kept them in the lands of abandonment (*fa-athbatathum fī mawāṭini 'l-hajr*).

[2:104] *O you who believe, do not say, 'Observe us'; but say, 'Regard us', and give ear; and for disbelievers awaits a painful chastisement.*

The objectives of enemies in all their states, including their actions and words, are malicious objectives,<sup>282</sup> for they remain tied to their ways in what they do and do not do. The way of the friends [of God] is to avoid being like them and to adopt a path which is not their path.

[2:105] *Those disbelievers of the People of the Scripture and the idolaters, do not wish that any good should be revealed to you from your Lord, but God singles out for His mercy, whom He will; God is of bounty abounding.*

The antipathy of the enemies towards the unwavering decency of the friends is unceasing and enduring. But the envious shall not prevail (*lākin al-ḥusūda lā yasūd*), nor will he obtain what he seeks (*wa lā yaḥṣul lahu maqṣūd*). The special qualities of mercy are sufficient for the friends, even if the enemies were to be abased<sup>283</sup> and the flanks and borders of the lands of their rejoicing were to be destroyed.

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<sup>282</sup> According to commentaries on this verse, the Jews used to use the Arabic expression 'observe us' (*rā'inā*) in addressing the Prophet because it resembled a derogatory phrase in their language (see *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and al-Wāḥidī's *Asbāb al-nuzūl* at [www.altafsir.com](http://www.altafsir.com)).

<sup>283</sup> The translation here follows the words *raghma mina 'l-'adā' ānāf* from MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f. 20b rather than the words *za'ama mina 'l-'adā' affāk* from the Basyūnī edition.

**[2:106] *And whatever verse We abrogate or postpone, We bring [in place] a better, or the like of it; do you not know that God has power over all things?***

Abrogation (*naskh*) is the removal of something, i.e., what moves you from one state to that which is above and superior to it, for the branch of your communion is forever flourishing and the star of your majesty is forever shining. ‘We do not abrogate anything of the traces of worship (‘*ibāda*) without substituting for it something from the lights of servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*). And We do not abrogate anything from the lights of servanthood without putting something in its place from the moons of servitude (‘*ubūda*).<sup>284</sup> Your innermost self is always rising (*taraqqā*) and your worth increases by the beauty of taking on the [divine] friendship (*tawallā*)’.

It is said, ‘We will not raise you from the place of servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*) without causing you to alight<sup>285</sup> on the plains of freedom (*hurriyya*).<sup>286</sup> We have not removed anything from you in human attributes (*ṣifāt al-bashariyya*) without elevating you in some divine witnessing (*shawāhid al-ulūhiyya*)’.<sup>287</sup>

**[2:107] *Do you not know that to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that you have none, besides God, neither protector, nor helper?***

His (s) way (*sunna*) is to draw His friends from the witnessing of what He possesses (*milk*) to the vision of His kingdom (*mulk*).<sup>288</sup> Then He takes them from viewing His kingdom to witnessing His Truth (*ḥaqq*), and then takes them from the vision of His signs (*ayāt*) to the vision of His attributes (*ṣifāt*), and from the vision of His attributes to the witnessing of His essence (*dhāt*).

**[2:108] *Or do you desire to question your Messenger as Moses was questioned, aforetime? Whoever exchanges belief for unbelief, has surely strayed from the even way.***

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<sup>284</sup> See Al-Qushayrī’s *Risala* in the ‘Section on Servanthood’ (*bāb al-‘ubūdiyya*) where these three terms (‘*ibāda*, ‘*ubūdiyya* and ‘*ubūda*) are applied to ordinary believers, the elect, and the elect of the elect in rising order (vol. 2, p. 428).

<sup>285</sup> The translation uses the word *aḥlalnāka* here from MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f. 20b rather than the word *salakaka* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>286</sup> i.e., the only true freedom (*hurriyya*) is found in perfected servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*). See the ‘Section on Freedom’ (*bāb al-ḥurriyya*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 460-463).

<sup>287</sup> In these two sentences, the translation follows the first plural verb conjugation forms found in MS K117, f. 15b.

<sup>288</sup> The translation follows the placement of the terms *milk* and *mulk* as found in MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f. 20b. The terms appear in the opposite order in the Basyūnī edition.

The Children of Israel annoyed Moses (‘a), and the Muslims were prohibited from following this precedent. They were commanded to be conscious of the bashfulness of the Messenger (s) as much as possible, so that in his presence it was as if they had birds on their heads. [God] Most High said: *Support him, and revere him* [48:9].<sup>289</sup> The beauty of refined behavior (*adab*) in outward circumstances is a model for the beauty of refined behavior with God inwardly.

**[2:109] *Many of the People of the Scripture long that they might make you disbelievers, after you have believed, from the envy of their own souls, after the truth has become clear to them; yet pardon and be forgiving till God brings His command; truly God has power over all things.***

Those who have lost understanding among the heedless wish that not even a star would rise over those who are in peace and safety (*salāma*), and those who are possessed by envy would like the sun to stop shining over those whom they envy. This is what the attributes of disbelievers are like, so God abases<sup>290</sup> and humbles them.<sup>291</sup>

The allusion in this is to the state of those who possess spiritual desire (*irāda*) in the beginning, when they embark on their travels. If they are not helped by success granted in companionship and they live among people following externals, these people will prevent them from travelling and will not stop in their advice to them. They will frighten them with weakness and threaten them with poverty until they divert them to the way of heedlessness and cut them off from the path of spiritual desire. These are the enemies of God in truth who have been overtaken by the enmity of the moment. Their punishment is being deprived of smelling any of the fragrances of sincerity (*ṣidq*).

***Yet pardon and be forgiving...***, for the way of the aspirant is to protect his innermost self from anyone or anything other [than God]. He tries to employ his best nature with each individual and spares no efforts in kindness, for soon the Real will open the way for him on his path.<sup>292</sup>

**[2:110] *And perform the prayer, and pay the alms; whatever good you shall offer for your own souls, you shall find it with God; assuredly God sees what you do.***

<sup>289</sup> According to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, the pronoun can be understood in Qur’ānic verse 48:9 as referring either to God or Muḥammad ([www.al-tafsir.com](http://www.al-tafsir.com)). Al-Qushayrī is choosing the latter reading for his commentary here.

<sup>290</sup> Literally, ‘puts their noses in the dirt’.

<sup>291</sup> Literally, ‘throws them down on their faces’.

<sup>292</sup> The translation follows the words ‘best nature’ (*khuluq*) and ‘kindness’ (*rifq*) from MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f.20b. Basyūnī is uncertain about the correctness of his text here. On the term *khuluq*, see the ‘Section on Noble Character’ (*bāb al-khuluq*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol.2, pp. 494-501).

The obligation for the aspirant is to perform the acts of intimate communication (*muwāṣalāt*) and to continually seek to gain access with different kinds of acts of drawing near (*qurubāt*), trusting that what he offers in sincere difficult efforts (*mujāhadāt*) will bear fruit in the final states (*hālāt*).

[2:111] *And they say, ‘None shall enter Paradise except those who are Jews or Christians’. Such are their desires. Say, ‘Produce your proof if you speak truly’.*

Each sect smooth things out<sup>293</sup> for itself, thinking salvation belongs to its situation, and claiming access [to Paradise] as its share. But mere guessing (*ḥusbān*) without the verification of proof (*burhān*) will not produce results (*lā ya ’tī bi-ḥāṣil*) nor be of any use (*wa lā yaḥūz bi-ṭā ’il*).

[2:112] *Nay, but, whoever submits his purpose to God, being virtuous, his reward is with his Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

He *submits his purpose* means he remains loyal to the quest for God, devotes his purpose to God alone, and purifies his pact<sup>294</sup> from any faults. *Being virtuous*, possessing knowledge by the truth of what he does and the truth of what he practices. He is virtuous in the end (*wa-huwa muḥsin fī ’l-ma ’āl*) just as he submits in the present (*kamā annahu muslim fī ’l-ḥāl*).

It is said virtuousness (*iḥsān*) is that you worship God as if you see Him, so that you will be submitting with your outward form and witnessing with your innermost hearts. Outwardly there is effort and physical prostration (*fī ’l-ẓāhir jahd wa-sujūd*) and inwardly there is unveiling and ecstatic finding (*fī ’l-bāṭin kashf wa-wujūd*).

It is said one *submits his purpose* by persisting in obedient actions, *being virtuous* performing the good manners (*ādāb*) of service by the beautiful manners of presence. No fear of abandonment (*hajr*) shall befall them, neither shall secret deception (*makr*) overcome them. This world shall not distract them from witnessing and the Hereafter shall not distract them tomorrow from the vision.

<sup>293</sup> The translation follows *yumahhidu ’l-amr* here from MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f. 21a rather than the phrase *yumahhidu ’l-amal* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>294</sup> The translation follows the word *’aqd* in MSS K117, f. 16a and Y101, f. 21a rather than the word ‘intellect’ (*’aql*) in the Basyūnī edition.



[2:113] *The Jews say, ‘The Christians stand on nothing’; and the Christians say, ‘The Jews stand on nothing’; yet they recite the Scripture. Thus, the ignorant say the like of what these say; God shall decide between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding their differences.*

The allusion in this verse is the opposite of the outward determination. Today the enemies [of God] disclaim one another and the friends [of God] do something similar. But they say that the Sufis will remain in a good state<sup>295</sup> so long as they quarrel and do not accept one other,<sup>296</sup> because if they were to accept one another they would stay with each other [rather than turning to God].

[2:114] *And who does greater evil than he who bars God’s places of worship, so that His Name be not invoked in them, and strives to ruin them?; such men might never enter them, save in fear; for them in this world is degradation; and in the Hereafter a mighty chastisement.*

The allusion in it is that the one who does evil is one who ruins the homelands (*awṭān*) of worship by carnal passions – and the homelands of worship are the selves of the worshippers (*nufūs al-‘ābidīn*). He ruins the homelands of knowledge by desires and attachments – and the homelands of knowledge are the hearts of the knowers (*qulūb al-‘ārīfīn*). He destroys the homelands of love by worldly concerns and familiar things – and [the homelands of love] are the spirits of the ecstasies (*arwāḥ al-wājidīn*). He ruins the homelands of witnessings by turning attention to acts of drawing near and [the homelands of witnessings] are the innermost selves of those who declare oneness (*asrār al-muwahḥidīn*).

*For them in this world is degradation; and in the Hereafter a mighty chastisement* For the people of allusion the degradation of this world is the ignominy of the veil and the punishment of the Hereafter is being held back in degrees.<sup>297</sup>

[2:115] *To God belong the East and the West; whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God. Lo! God is Embracing, Knowing.*

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<sup>295</sup> The phrase *bi-khabar*<sup>in</sup> in the Basyūnī edition is a typographical error. It has been replaced with *bi-khayr*<sup>in</sup> from MSS K117, f. 15b and Y101, f. 21a.

<sup>296</sup> In the first part of this sentence, al-Qushayrī is quoting from a statement attributed to Ruwaym. The entire statement can be found in the ‘Section on Sufism’ (*bāb al-taṣawwuf*) in his *Risāla*, where he quotes him as saying, ‘The Sufis will remain in a good state so long as they quarrel and do not accept one another. If they were to agree, there would be no good in them’ (vol. 2, p. 554).

<sup>297</sup> The Qur’ān speaks of ‘degrees’ in the Hereafter, as in verses 6:132 and 46:19: *All shall have degrees according to what they have done.*



The allusion in it is to the eastern and western places of hearts. The hearts have rising lights (*shawāriq*) and night visitors (*tawāriq*). The night visitors are the murmurings (*hawājis*) of the lower selves that arrive in the darknesses of desire and carnal passions. The rising lights are the stars of different types of knowledge, the moons of presence and the suns of gnosis.

As long as the lights are rising the *qibla* of hearts is clear and visible. Then when the realities take over, the authority of the lights become hidden like stars at the rising of the sun. Similarly at the appearance of the Real there is destruction and subjugation, so there is no witnessing of any trace, no remaining sensation or comprehension, no power of intellect or knowledge, no illumination of mystical knowledge. For the experiencing of all these qualities lasts only as long as human nature lasts. When those who have attributes become effaced, how can any attribute of theirs remain?

He said, ‘*whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God*’. As long as there is a remnant or even a sliver of sensory perception and ability to differentiate, then the *qibla* should be aimed for, and if it is not known, it should be sought. According to scholars, when the guideposts in every direction are obscure and there is no knowledge of the *qibla*, all directions are equally permissible for prayer since none of them can be preferred for the intention (*niyya*).<sup>298</sup>

[2:116] *And they say, ‘God has taken to Himself a son’; Glory be to Him!*

He deceived them when He did not bring them to naught right away. Instead He made the occasion of their being deluded the lengthening of respite. They spoke a grave calumny (*firyā*) against God and devised an astonishing argument (*miryā*) in describing God by attributing a son to Him. How can there be a son when He is singular in Essence (*dhāt*)? There is no limitation to His Essence and no carnal desire possible in His attributes (*ṣifāt*).

[2:116 cont’d] *Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will.*

i.e., there is nothing in engendered existence (*kawn*) from traces in need (*āthār muftaqira*) or independent entities (‘*ayān mustaqilla*’)<sup>299</sup> except that which the traces of the inborn

<sup>298</sup> Prayer begins with the intention (*niyya*) to make prayer.

<sup>299</sup> See the Translator’s Introduction for a discussion of al-Qushayrī’s use of the terms ‘trace’ (*athar*, pl. *āthār*) and ‘essence’ or ‘entity’ (‘*ayn*, pl. ‘*ayān*). In this passage, the term ‘traces in need’ (*āthār muftaqira*) suggests potentialities and relationships, while the term ‘independent entities’ (‘*ayān mustaqilla*’) suggests what we think of as ‘things’. Al-Qushayrī seems to be saying here that there is nothing – perceptible or subtle (material things, animate creatures, actions, relationships, qualities) – that does not ‘speak’ and bear witness to the divine. As he explains in the commentary on Qur’ānic

disposition (*khilqa*) proclaim and the testimonies of the primordial nature (*fiṭra*) articulate: every silent thing among them is speaking (*nāṭiq*) and is a proof (*dalīl*) and a witness (*shāhid*) to His (s) oneness (*waḥdāniyya*).

**[2:117] *Creator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing, He but says to it ‘Be’, and it is.***

The Creator, according to the scholars, is the One Who brings the entity (‘*ayn*) into existence without any model (*lā ‘alā mithāl*).<sup>300</sup> According to the people of allusion He is the One Who nothing is like Him (*laysa lahu shay<sup>um</sup> mithlihi*)<sup>301</sup> so this term alludes to both the negation of any likeness (*mithl*) to His Essence and the negation of any model (*mithāl*) for His Acts. He is the One (*al-aḥad*) without any quantity comprising Him, the Eternal (*al-ṣamad*) Whom no final point in time cuts off, the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) Whom no imagination can picture, and the Existent (*al-mawjūd*) of Whom no understanding is capable. When He decrees an affair, no decreed thing (*maqdūr*) can oppose it and nothing which is created<sup>302</sup> can be separated from His determination (*ḥukm*).

**[2:118] *And they, who do not know, say, ‘Why does God not speak to us?; Why does a sign not come to us?’ So, spoke those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are much alike. Yet We have made clear the signs to a people who are certain.***

The speaking (*kalām*) of God (s) is connected to all created things in their essences (‘*ayān*) and their traces (*āthār*)<sup>303</sup> by the command to ‘be’ (*amr al-takwīn*) and includes those who have been charged [with the law] (*mukallaḥūn*) by the prescriptive command (*amr al-taklīf*).<sup>304</sup> But whoever lacks the ear of comprehension is deaf to hearing the Real. He (s) addressed some among the People of the Book and they heard His address, but they were not able to bear it and, after they recognized the gravity of the signs, they engaged in distortion and alteration. Included in the signs which He made manifest were what removes the defect of anything other [than Him] (*al-‘illa min al-aghyār*) and quenches the thirst from things that are better (*al-ghulla min al-akhyār*). But what proofs, even if they were plain and clear, would suffice those to whom wretchedness is deserved and has already come?

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verse 2:118 that follows, God’s speech (*kalām*) is connected to all of these. See also his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:18 below.

<sup>300</sup> The translation follows the word ‘model’ (*mithāl*) found in MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b rather than the word ‘like’ (*mithl*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>301</sup> The phrase here *laysa lahu shay<sup>um</sup> mithlihi* is an echo of Qur’ānic verse 42:11: *There is nothing like Him (laysa ka-mithlihi shay<sup>um</sup>)*.

<sup>302</sup> The translation follows the word ‘created’ (*maḥzūr*) from MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b rather than the word ‘forbidden thing’ (*maḥẓūr*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>303</sup> See the Translator’s Introduction for a discussion of al-Qushayrī’s use of the terms ‘trace’ (*athar*, pl. *āthār*) and ‘essence’ or ‘entity’ (‘*ayn*, pl. *ayān*).

<sup>304</sup> The translation of this sentence follows the text in MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b.

[2:119] *We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good tidings, and warner. You shall not be asked about the inhabitants of Hell-fire.*

‘We have singled you [Muḥammad] out with qualities which We did not make appear in anyone else, so all people are under your banner. Those who are accepted are in conformity with you while those who are rejected oppose you. There will be no questioning of you about the states of others and no turning away<sup>305</sup> from you because of anyone’.

[2:120] *Never will the Jews be pleased with you, neither the Christians, not until you follow their creed, Say: ‘God’s guidance is the true guidance’. And if you were to follow their whims, after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have against God neither friend, nor helper.*

‘Do not concern yourself with pleasing the enemies after you have received Our good pleasure (*riḍā*), for they will not be pleased with you unless you follow their religions and that would be impossible.<sup>306</sup> So declare yourself free of them, make your difference apparent, and show enmity towards them. Know that their reliance on what they find pleasing is the cause of endless wretchedness. Don’t worry yourself. Call your community to free themselves of them and their path and be for Us, through Us, free of anyone other than Us, trusting in Our help, for you are through Us and from<sup>307</sup> Us’.

[2:121] *Those to whom We have given the Scripture, and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers.*

‘Those whom We have opened the eyes of their hearts<sup>308</sup> to witnessing Our truth – We have entrusted the ears of their hearts with hearing Our address. We have chosen them by letting the lights<sup>309</sup> of solicitude shine down on them, and We have supported them by confirming the instruction in their innermost selves (*asrār*). They practice the true recitation and are characterized by the qualities of faith and knowledge. They are the people of special designation (*takhṣiṣ*) and those who are not with them are the rejected’.

<sup>305</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which was filled in with ‘avoidance’ (*maḥīd*) from MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f.21b.

<sup>306</sup> The Basyūnī edition has *wa-dūna dhālika lahum ḥazz al-qitāl* here but what is probably meant is *wa-dūna dhālika lahum kharṭu’l-qatād*. The text in MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b could be read this way. It means, ‘Before that, they would have to strip the tragacanth of its leaves by grasping each branch and drawing his hand down it’, which is very close to a proverb quoted by Lane in his comments on the verb *kharāṭa*, (Lane, vol. 1, p. 723).

<sup>307</sup> The translation follows ‘from Us’ (*minnā*) from MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b rather than ‘for Us’ (*lanā*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>308</sup> The translation of the phrase ‘the eyes of their hearts’ (*abṣār qulūbihim*) is based on MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b. The Basyūnī edition has just the word ‘eyes’ (*abṣār*).

<sup>309</sup> The translation follows the plural ‘lights’ (*anwār*) from MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 21b rather than the singular ‘light’ (*nūr*) in the Basyūnī edition.

[2:122] *O Children of Israel, remember My favor wherewith I favored you, and that I have preferred you over all the worlds.*

His (s) way (*sunna*) in His address with the people of Moses (‘a) is to call them by their proper name, saying, ‘*O Children of Israel, remember...*’, i.e., ‘O Children of Jacob’. But He addresses this community [of Muḥammad] honorically, saying, ‘*O you who believe...*’<sup>310</sup>

[2:123] *And beware of a day when no soul shall for another be requited, and no compensation shall be accepted from it, nor any intercession shall benefit it, neither shall they be helped.*

As for the enemies, nothing [i.e., no payment or compensation] will be accepted from them. As for the friends, [the Prophet] (s) said, ‘*Beware of the fire even if it be on account of half a date [given in charity]*’.<sup>311</sup> The intercession of intercessors will not benefit the disbeliever, for this is a determination made for each community with their prophet.<sup>312</sup> As for the believers, they will benefit in particular from the Prophet’s (s) intercession. Everyone on that day will be saying, ‘My soul, my soul’, but Our Prophet (s) will say, ‘My community, my community’.<sup>313</sup>

[2:124] *And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them,*

The trial (*balā’*) is the verification of friendship (*walā’*), and the most sincere in friendship are tested the most. The Real (s) tested His friend (*khalīl*) (‘a) by what He imposed upon him and prescribed for him, and [Abraham] upheld the necessary conditions and fulfilled the

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<sup>310</sup> As in Qur’ānic verse 2:104 above and many others.

<sup>311</sup> In other words, there will be no way to make amends at the final reckoning. The friends of God are those who are most aware of this, in even the smallest of actions. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān traces this *ḥadīth* to al-Bukhārī in several places of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Al-Zakāt 28, and several other sources.

<sup>312</sup> Qur’ānic verse 2:225 says, ‘*Who is there, that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?*’

<sup>313</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān identifies this as a *ḥadīth* and gives Ibn Hanbal’s *Musnad*, 1:282, as one of several sources. In a footnote, Basyūnī does not characterize the saying as a *ḥadīth*, but rather cites al-Qushayrī mention of it in words attributed to his teacher Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq in the ‘Section on Chivalry’ (*futuwwa*) in his *Risāla*: ‘Chivalry (*futuwwa*) is noble character (*khuluq*), which was perfect only in the Messenger of God (s), for everyone at the Day of the Resurrection will be saying, ‘My soul, my soul’, but he will be saying, ‘my community, my community’ (vol. 2, p. 472). Although al-Qushayrī accepts the category of ‘enemies’ (*a’ḍā’*) of the prophets, the angel Gabriel and God as described in the Qur’ān, in his *Risāla* he quotes Sufis who say that the chivalrous individual has no adversary (*khaṣm*) but himself (vol. 2, p. 473) and does not care whether the person he eats with is a disbeliever (*kāfir*) or a friend (*walī*) of God (vol. 2., p. 474).

requirements decreed. So He (s) praised him, saying, ‘*And Abraham, who fulfilled (waffā)*’ (53:37), [which is] from *tawfiya*,<sup>314</sup> i.e., he did not fall short in any way whatsoever.

It is said He imposed the burdens of prophecy on him and sought from him the properties of friendship (*khulla*). The most intense trial for him was upholding the conditions of friendship and being singled out for avoidance of everyone and everything. He performed what made that sound, withdrawing from everything other than Him secretly and publicly. Because of that,<sup>315</sup> he paid no attention to Gabriel (‘a) when he appeared to him as he was being thrown into the depths of destruction. [Gabriel] said, ‘Do you need anything?’ He said, ‘From you? No’. It was part of the perfection of his trial that Gabriel (‘a) appeared to him in this state. What would there have been left of him that would leave a place for any created being, whoever that might have been?<sup>316</sup>

In this there is a subtle allusion to the difference between the state of our Prophet (s) and the state of Abraham (‘a) because Gabriel appeared to the friend and showed himself to him and [Abraham] said, ‘From you? No’. But Gabriel was not capable of companionship with the Prophet (s) and thus expressed his weakness, saying ‘If I were to come closer so much as a fingertip, I would be consumed by fire’.<sup>317</sup> What a difference between the state in which Gabriel (‘a) has the power to show himself to the Friend (‘a) and the state in which he acknowledges his weakness before the Beloved (s).

[2:124 cont’d] *He said, ‘I make you a leader (imām) for the people’. Said he, ‘And of my seed?’ He said, ‘My covenant shall not reach the evildoers’.*

The leader (*imām*) is the one who is to be emulated. This had already been confirmed regarding [Abraham] in that [God] told all men up to the Day of the Resurrection to emulate him. He said: *The creed of your father Abraham [is yours]* (22:78), i.e., they followed the creed of Abraham, meaning the declaration of God’s unity (*tawhīd*). [God’s] saying: *Take to yourselves Abraham’s station for a place of prayer* [2:125] is verification of this leadership (*imāma*). The station of leadership is that one understands from the Real, and then gives that understanding to created beings, so as to be a mediator between the Real (*ḥaqq*) and created beings (*khalq*). In his outward situation he will be with created beings, not being listless in conveying the message. In his inner situation, he will be witnessing the Real. The clarity of his state will not waver, and he will say to mankind what the Real says to him.

<sup>314</sup> The verbal noun corresponding to the verb *waffa*.

<sup>315</sup> The translation follows the phrase *li-dhālīka* from MSS K117, f. 16b and Y101, f. 22a rather than the phrase *ka-dhālīka* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>316</sup> i.e., because Abraham was ‘absent from himself in God Most High and did not see with God anything other than God, may He be exalted and glorified’, as al-Qushari writes in a comment on this story in the ‘Section on Trust’ (*bāb al-tawakkul*) in his *Risāla* (vol.1, p.371).

<sup>317</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote indicating that this is what Gabriel is said to have said on the Night of the Prophet’s Ascension, as detailed in al-Qushayrī’s *Kitāb al-mi‘rāj*.

**‘And of my seed?’:** [Abraham] spoke out of compassion for them and he asked for that which would bring them honor, but [God] informed him that worthiness has nothing to do with lineage or connection. Rather these are allotments that [God’s] decrees bring about, and He said to him, **‘My covenant shall not reach the evildoers’**. This is not like the blessing of this world, which is all encompassing in its provisions, for it is not withheld from anyone, even if he is a disbeliever. Because of that He said, *‘And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this a land secure and provide its people with fruits; such of them as believe in God...’ [2:125] and ‘whoever disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment, a little...’ [2:125].* This means that the present world is not so important that it should be denied the disbelievers. But ‘My covenant will only reach those whom I have chosen from the elect of My servants’. Food and drink are not kept from anyone (*ammā ’l-ta ’ām wa ’l-sharāb fa-ghayru mamnū ’in min aḥad*) but Islam and love are not offered to everyone (*ammā ’l-islām wa ’l-maḥābb fa-ghayru mabdhūlin li-kulli aḥad.*)

**[2:125] And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary:**

‘Mention, O Muḥammad, when **We appointed the House**, meaning the Ka‘ba, **to be a place of visitation for people** to come to **and a sanctuary** for them to return to, making their way to it from every direction. It is a House which I created from stone yet attached to eternity. Whoever looks to the House with the natural eye is cut off, while those who look with the eye of far reaching vision arrive and connect.<sup>318</sup> Everyone who seeks refuge at that House is secure from the punishment of the Hereafter, if his seeking refuge is for magnification, showing respect, and repenting from sins’.

It is said the House was built of stone but it is a stone that attracts hearts just as magnetite attracts iron.

[What kind of house is it?]

A house...Its shade causes whoever comes to it to remain in the courtyard of security (*amn*).

A house...Whoever’s glance falls upon it receives the good news of forgiveness attained.

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<sup>318</sup> In the ‘Section on Advice for Aspirants’ (*bāb al-waṣīyya li’l-murīdīn*) in his *Risāla* al-Qushayrī writes, ‘One must give precedence to knowledge of the Lord of the House (*s*) over visiting the House, for if there were no knowledge of the Lord of the House, it would not be necessary to visit it’ (vol. 2, p. 742).

A house...Subtleties circumambulate the heart of whomever circumambulates it. One circumambulation is by another circumambulation and one circuit is by another circuit. *Is the reward of goodness anything but goodness?* [55:60].

A house...Whatever one spends of one's wealth to reach is not lost.

A house...Whatever one withholds from it is without profit. Whoever visits it forgets any other place of visitation and abandons his [own] regions.

A house...No distance is reckoned too far to it. Visiting it is not to be neglected for fear of unpleasant occurrences or harmful attacks. This is a house which possesses no harm for the lifeblood of the poor (*fuqarā'*).

A house...Whoever holds back from visiting it lacks nobleheartedness (*futuwwa*) or is deficient in love (*maḥabba*).

A house...The heart of the one who holds back from it is harder than stones.

A house...When the rays of its lights fall upon one, he is made to forget suns and moons.

A house...One is not so much amazed by those who stay away from it but rather how those who come to it can leave!

[2:125 cont'd] *'Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer';*

A servant was raised up on his feet for the sake of God (s), making his footprints a *qibla* until the Resurrection for all Muslims to honor him for all time.<sup>319</sup>

[2:125 cont'd] *and We made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify My House for those that shall go round it (ṭā'ifūn) and those that cleave to it ('ākifīn), to those who bow and prostrate themselves'.*

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<sup>319</sup> This is a reference to the stone identified as 'the station of Abraham', which is kept in the sanctuary of the Ka'ba. The impression of two footprints on this stone are said to have been left by Abraham as he built the Ka'ba.



In the outward sense the affair concerns the purification of the House, while the allusion in the verse is to the purification of the heart. The purification of the House is by protecting it from different kinds of dirt and filth (*al-adnās wa 'l-awḍār*), and the purification of the heart is by guarding it from paying attention to one's kind or anything other [than God] (*al-ajnās wa 'l-aghyār*).

The circumambulation of the pilgrims around the House is known through the law. The circumambulation of meanings is known to the people of the Real. Meanings are going round (*tā'ifa*) in the hearts of those who know (*qulūb al- 'ārīfīn*). Realities are cleaving (*'ākifa*) in the hearts of those who declare oneness (*qulūb al-muwaḥḥidīn*). These are the companions of transformation (*aṣḥāb al-talwīn*) and those are the lords of stability (*arbāb al-tamkīn*).<sup>320</sup>

The hearts of those who seek their objective (*qulūb al-qāṣidīn*) remain ever standing (*wāqifa*) at the door of generosity, continually practicing humility. The hearts of those who declare oneness (*qulūb al-muwaḥḥidīn*) remain ever bowing (*rāki'a*) on the carpet of union. The hearts of the ecstasies (*qulūb al-wājidīn*) remain ever prostrating (*sājida*) on the carpet of nearness.

It is said the ascendant longings of the seekers are ever standing (*wāqifa*) at the door of magnanimity. The lofty resolutions of the aspirants remain ever circumambulating (*tā'ifa*) the place of witnessing [divine] generosity. The aspirations that come to those who know are ever cleaving (*'ākifa*) to the presence of majesty.

**[2:126] *And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a land secure and provide its people with fruits; such of them as believe in God and the Last Day', He said, 'And whoever disbelieves, to him I shall give enjoyment, a little, then I shall compel him to the chastisement of the Fire — how evil a journey's end!'***

***And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a land secure:*** The request is answered when it has not been adulterated by the worldly concern of the servant. Abraham's request was not for his own pleasure (*ḥazz*) but rather for the right (*ḥaqq*) of his Lord, may He be exalted and glorified. When Abraham was mindful of the required etiquette in seeking provision for those who believed, they were granted that but so were those who did not believe. [On the other hand], when he spoke about leadership, saying '*And of my seed?*' [2:125] without [divine] permission, [the request] was denied and it was said to him, '*My covenant shall not reach the evildoers*' [2:125].

<sup>320</sup> Al-Qushayrī discusses the terms 'Transformation and Stability' (*al-talwīn wa 'l-tamkīn*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 232-5).



[2:127] *And when Abraham raised up the foundations of the House, and Ishmael with him: ‘Our Lord! Receive this from us. Truly You are the Hearing, the Knowing.*

The success of the request is in the sincerity of the supplication. When the two of them humbly sought aid in prayer, he gave them help and fulfilled the request.

*‘Truly You are the Hearing* of our speech, *the Knowing* of our states’.

[2:128] *Our Lord! And make us submissive to You and, of our seed, a community submissive to You; and show us our holy rites, and relent to us. Surely You are the Relenting, the Merciful.*

*‘Submissive (muslimīn)*, yielding to Your decree so that not one vein of ours throbs without Your good pleasure. Make *from our seed* a community submissive to You so that after us they will take our place in upholding Your rights’. What a difference between one who seeks someone to inherit his wealth (*man yaṭlub wārithan li-mālihi*) and one who seeks a deputy after him to perform acts of obedience to Him in his states (*man yaṭlub nā’ib<sup>an</sup>...fī aḥwālihi*).

*‘Show us our holy rites* since there is no way to know what conforms [to Your will] except by the path of God granted success and communication’.

*‘And relent to us* after our carrying out all that You have commanded us to do so that we do not look to what we do and don’t do,<sup>321</sup> but will turn back to You from witnessing our actions, so there will be no danger of hidden idolatry(*al-shirk al-khaṭī*) in imagining anything from us or through us’.

[2:129] *Our Lord! And send among them a messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them; You are the Mighty, the Wise.*

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<sup>321</sup> Literally, our ‘movements and states of rest’ (*ḥarakāt wa sakanāt*).

Because the obligations were received from messengers and were not merely something intellectually perceived, [Abraham] asked that they not be left to themselves, without a messenger or law. He requested that the messenger be **one of them** so that they would feel more at home with him and it would be easier for them. Its meaning, rightly understood, is that when He (s) informed [Abraham] of the state of our Prophet (s), [Abraham] asked for the completion of what He had promised by way of the one He commanded.<sup>322</sup>

**[2:130] Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham, except he who fools himself? Indeed We chose him in this world, and in the Hereafter he shall be among the righteous.**

He related that among created beings, He preferred the friend (*al-khalīl*) (ṣa) and therefore made his religion (*dīn*) the religion. Its distinguishing mark is declaring [God's] oneness (*tawḥīd*) and its attribute is knowledge (*ma'rifa*). For whoever shrinks from [Abraham's] religion or deviates from his way (*sunna*), the false becomes where he is dumped (*maṭraḥu*) and disbelief becomes where he falls (*mahwāhu*), since the lights in their entirety are only acquired from [Abraham's] light.

**[2:131] When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of the Worlds'.**

Islām is sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and submission (*istislām*). Its true meaning is withdrawing entirely from the states of mortal humanity (*bashariyya*) with respect to the struggles over free choice (*ikhhtiyār*) and the oppositional tendencies of the lower self (*mu'āraḍāt al-naḥs*). [Abraham] said, '**I have submitted to the Lord of the Worlds**: I have accepted the command (*amr*), hearing and obeying, and I have embraced the decree (*ḥukm*) as much as I am able'. He did not hold back any of his wealth, body or progeny. When he was commanded to sacrifice his son, he intended to do it. When He said to him, 'Release him from his bond', he did what he was commanded to do. There was no free choice in either of the states for him and no self-directing (*tadbīr*).

It is said his saying, '**I have submitted (aslamtu)**' was surely not by way of any claim for himself because the true meaning of *islām* is rather to absolve oneself of strength and power. So when He said, '**I have submitted**', it was as if he said, 'Raise me up in what you have charged me and carry out from me that to which you have commanded me'. He turned the affair over to Him without proclaiming any meaning or warrant from himself.

It is said He bid him to take on the demands of the divine power of deliberation (*muṭālabāt al-quḍra*), for surely one who takes up his abode in friendship, what dwells in him is what

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<sup>322</sup> i.e., Muḥammad.

dwells in the other (*fa-inna man ḥalla fī l-khullati maḥallahu yaḥullu bihi lā maḥāla mā ḥalla bihi*).<sup>323</sup>

One might ask a question here: How could Abraham (ʿa) have said, ‘*I have submitted*’, when it was said to our Prophet (ṣ), ‘*Know*’,<sup>324</sup> but he did not say, ‘I have come to know?’ The answer for that has several aspects, one of which is that the Prophet (ṣ) said, ‘*I am the most knowledgeable of you about God*’,<sup>325</sup> but since a law did not come after him it used to be said about him that he said, ‘I have come to know’ (‘*alimtu*’).

It is said God (s) spoke about the Messenger (‘a) in His saying, ‘*The Messenger believes*’ [2:285], because belief is knowledge of God (swt). The words of the Real and the information He gave about him is more perfect than his (‘a) giving information from himself [as Abraham did].

Another aspect is that when Abraham spoke, saying ‘*I have submitted*’, he was subjected to the trial, whereas our Prophet (ṣ) was wary of anything that could take the form of a claim, and so he was protected and spared.

Another aspect is that Abraham (‘a) was commanded to follow a course of actions that indicate submission to Him, whereas our Prophet (ṣ) was commanded to know. The shares of submission (*islām*) are limited while the subtleties of knowledge are not.<sup>326</sup>

[2:132] *And Abraham enjoined upon his sons this, and [so did] Jacob, ‘My sons, God has chosen for you the [true] religion, see that you die not save in submission.*

He related that Abraham (‘a) enjoined his sons, as did Jacob (‘a), saying ‘Do not let death come upon you except in the state of submission (*islām*)’. Their laws, even if they differed in acts, were of one origin. The drinking place of declaring oneness (*tawḥīd*) is not divided into two. God Most High’s words: *God has chosen for you the [true] religion* was good news in

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<sup>323</sup> This is a good example of al-Qushayrī’s untranslatable word play.

<sup>324</sup> Al-Qushayrī does not indicate which Qur’ānic verse he is referring to here. It is possible it is the address to Muḥammad in 49:17: *Know, then, that there is no god except God, and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women.*

<sup>325</sup> Basyūnī cites versions of this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

<sup>326</sup> The translation here follows MSS K117, f. 18a and Y101, f. 23a in the more complete version of the end of this sentence: *li-aqsām al-islām ḥaṣr wa-laysa li-laṭā’if al-’ilm ḥaṣr*. Basyūnī explains his understanding of this section in a footnote, saying that while submission is a human act, knowledge is not something acquired by the servant through his own efforts, but rather is apportioned to him from the source of generosity.

strengthening their desire, in their supplications, for what He had charged them with in submitting (*islām*), because when they realized that God (*s*) had chosen them for that, they knew that without doubt He would help them and make it easy for them to perform the just claim of submission (*islām*).

[2:133] *Or, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? When he said to his sons, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We will worship your God*

All of them (*ṣa*) followed one way in declaring oneness (*tawḥīd*) and submission (*islām*). They inherited that one after another from their forefathers and were the people of the house of intimacy, deserving of nearness, and purified in truth by God.

[2:133 cont’d] *and the God of your fathers Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, One God, to Him we submit’.*

[Jacob’s sons] did not say, ‘Our God’, out of respect for [Jacob’s] special status, inasmuch as they accepted his superiority and saw themselves as attached to his station (*maqām*). [Rather], they said of themselves that they were followers of [Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac]<sup>327</sup> in their saying, ‘*and to Him we submit’*’.

[2:134] *That is a community that has passed away; theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you shall not be asked about what they did.*

The Real (*s*) sent down to each his place and singled out for each one his status according to His decree (*ḥukm*). There is no news about their outward forms and no remaining trace of what distinguished each group from the others. Each is a king in his region and each has a celestial sphere revolving in felicity.

[2:135] *And they say, ‘Be Jews or Christians, and you shall be guided’. Say, ‘Nay, rather the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf; and he was not of the idolaters’.*

Its meaning is: ‘When the groups contended with you [Muḥammad], they demanded that you agree (*muwāfaqa*) with them. Stand firm in opposing that to which they call you, and turn your attention increasingly to Us, following the way of the friend (*al-khalīl*) in withdrawing

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<sup>327</sup> The translation here follows MSS K117, f. 18a and Y101, f. 23b in the phrase ‘that they were followers of them’ (*annahum tubba ‘u lahum*).

from the group, whether it be one's own father or anyone else who is not in accord (*lā yuwāfiqū*) with his Protector'. Thus He said, '*And I shall shun you and that which you call upon besides God*' [19:48]. The *ḥanīf* is the 'one who leans'<sup>328</sup> towards the straight Truth on the path, the Truth free from any defect of creation, in agreement (*wāfiq*) with the Truth by the Truth.<sup>329</sup>

[2:136] *Say: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been revealed to us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord, we make no division between any of them, and to Him we submit'.*

Because our Prophet (ṣ) believed in everything that was revealed before him, he was honored with everything that [God] had conferred in honor before him. When [God] proclaimed the harmony (*muwāfaqa*) of all [the messages of the prophets], He entrusted everything in existence under [Muḥammad's] banner. [Muḥammad] said, '*Adam and all others shall be under my banner at the Day of the Resurrection*'.<sup>330</sup>

When his community believed in everything that God revealed to His messengers and made *no division between any of them*, they drew the highest share in honor and took precedence over all communities.

[2:137] *And if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are truly guided; but if they turn away, then they are clearly in schism; God will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower.*

'If they travel your path and adopt your way, they will be honored with what you have been honored and they will attain what you have attained.'<sup>331</sup> If they insist on making a distinction [between the prophets], We will insist upon their abasement. Surely We stand by those who serve you, O Muḥammad, in close relationship, and We turn away from those who differ with you and oppose you [even] in what is necessary.<sup>332</sup> Whoever opposes you is on the side of the enemies and whoever serves you is on the side of the friends'.

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<sup>328</sup> From the root *h-n-f* 'he inclined' (Lane, vol.1, p. 658).

<sup>329</sup> The Basyūnī edition ends after the citation of Qur'ānic verse 19:48 and the words 'for the truth, by the truth'. The translation follows the more complete version that occurs in MSS K117, f. 18a and Y101, f. 23b.

<sup>330</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote with a slightly different version of this *ḥadīth* from al-Tirmidhī, *Muntakhab kanz al-'Ummāl*, 6:79. 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-'Ajlūnī's *Kashf al-Khafā*, 1:16, and al-Suyūṭī's *Durr al-Manthūr*, 6:301, as sources.

<sup>331</sup> The pronoun 'you' is plural in this sentence.

<sup>332</sup> Basyūnī thinks 'in what is necessary' (*bi'l-wājib*) is incorrect here but it is what appears in MSS K117, f. 18a and Y101, f. 23b, as well as the manuscript he was working from.

**‘God will suffice you against them. He is the Hearer, the Knower:** The sufficiency of God is shown to be true (*kifāyat Allāh mutaḥaqqiqā*) because the solicitude of God is connected to you (*li-anna ‘ināyat Allāh bi-kum muta‘alliqa*). Whoever act adversely towards you, My hands of help will crush (*fa-man nābadhakum qaṣamathu ayādi‘l-nuṣra*) and whoever opposes you, matters of fate will subjugate (*wa-man khālafakum qaharathu qaḍāyā‘l-qisma*). **He is the Hearer** of the continual whispered conversation of your innermost selves with Us (*li-munājāti asrārikum ma‘nā ‘alā waṣfi‘l-dawām*), **the Knower** of your worthiness from Us of the special favors of kindness and honoring (*bi-stiḥqāqikum minnā khaṣā‘iṣi‘l-luṭfi wa‘l-ikrām*)’.

[2:138] *The mark of God; and who has a better mark than God? And Him we worship.*

Its meaning is ‘They have been attached to the mark (*ṣibgha*) of God’. [The word ‘mark’] is in the accusative because of the elision of the verb.<sup>333</sup>

The allusion is to the fact that the admonitory lesson is in what the Real has set down, not in what the servant makes up. What mankind takes on will pass away in the end while what the Real has firmly established for [humankind] is the primordial nature (*al-fiṭra*), so his establishment of it is the lesson.

The hearts have a mark, the spirits have a mark, the innermost selves have a mark, and the outward selves have a mark. The mark of corporeal and outward selves (*al-ashbāḥ wa‘l-ẓawāhir*) is in the traces of God granted success (*āthār al-tawfīq*) and the mark of the spirits and innermost selves (*al-arwāḥ wa‘l-sarā‘ir*) is in the lights of realization (*anwār al-taḥqīq*).

[2:139] *Say: ‘Would you then dispute with us concerning God, and He is our Lord and your Lord? Our deeds belong to us, and to you belong your deeds, and to Him we are sincerely devoted’.*

How can disputing with strangers be appropriate when they are under the covering of absence and in the shadows of concealment, while the friends are in the light of unveiling and bright noon of witnessing?

<sup>333</sup> According to *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, the verbal noun *ṣibgha* is in the accusative because of the implied verbal construction, ‘that is to say, *ṣabaghanā‘Llāhu*, “God has marked us”’ (trans. by Feras Hamza, <http://al-tafsir.com>).

When is the state of one who is bankrupt by his absence equivalent to one whose selection and sincere devotion to being immersed in acts of drawing near to Him is decreed? It is preposterous – there is no equality!

[2:140] *Or do you say: ‘Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes — they were Jews, or they were Christians?’ Say: ‘Have you then greater knowledge, or has God? And who does greater injustice than he who conceals a testimony received from God? And God is not heedless of what you do’.*

Whoever looks to creation from himself forms an image of each thing based on his own character and considers everything to be something like him. When they, by virtue of being outsiders [to the Real], judged the prophets (‘a) according to their own state, the Real (s) threw their conjecturing back upon them and left them in their own opinion.<sup>334</sup> Are those who have been drawn away from their own testimony like those who are veiled in it? Is the one who is snatched away from all of it equal to the one who is thrown back to what is like him? That is the conjecturing of those who disbelieve – what misery is theirs!

[2:141] *That is a community that has passed away; theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you shall not be asked about what they did.*

The barriers of fate came between you and them, for they built their structures on separation and heedlessness while you have pitched your tents on closeness and connection. The freedman of Our favor (‘atīq faḍlinā) is not like the fugitive of Our force (ṭarīd qahrinā).

[2:142] *The fools among the people will say, ‘What has turned them from the direction they were facing in their prayers formerly?’*

The eyes of the disbelievers were weak so the correct view was not apparent to them in all the circumstances of the believers. They looked with an eye to finding ugliness and let loose their tongues in opposing everything that was and would be from [the believers]. They did not see anything new without bringing forth a new objection to it. That included the change in the matter of the *qibla* when it was shifted to the Ka‘ba.<sup>335</sup> They said that if their *qibla* had been right, what was it that turned them from it? So He said:

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<sup>334</sup> The blank in Baysūnī here as been completed from the text in MSS K117, f. 18b and Y101, f. 24a.

<sup>335</sup> The verse refers to the shifting of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Ka‘ba.



[2:142 cont'd] *Say: 'To God belong the East and the West. He guides whomever He will to a straight path'.*

The servants worship towards any region and direction they will. Similarly the companions of absence and those veiled from witnessing the Real's granting of free agency to His friends, seek only certain aspects of the affair and bring their own states to bear upon them. If they had seen the whole with singular vision, they would have been saved from the pain of divisive thinking, the distraction of accursed thoughts, and the claims of fractured conjecturing, but God guides whom He wills to His light.

[2:143] *Thus, We appointed you a midmost community that you might be witnesses to the people; and that the Messenger might be a witness to you,*

The midmost is the best and He appointed this community the best of communities. He appointed this group (*tā'ifa*)<sup>336</sup> the best of this community for they are the best of the best. Just as this community will be witnesses over the communities at the Resurrection, so this group are the foundational roots (*uṣūl*) around which [the community] turns: they are the pole (*quṭb*) and through them God protects the entire community. Whomever their hearts accept is accepted and whomever their hearts reject is rejected – the judgment (*ḥukm*) is theirs.<sup>337</sup> Their discernment (*firāsa*) is sincere and true (*ṣādiq*), their judgment (*ḥukm*) is sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and their consideration (*naẓar*) is correct (*ṣā'ib*), a protection for the entire community from agreeing in error. The protection of this group from error is in [their] consideration and judgment, [their] acceptance and rejection. Moreover, the building of their affair rests upon the way (*sunna*) of the Messenger (*ṣ*). Anything which is not an emulation of the Messenger (*'a*) is a rejection of him and its follower has nothing.

[2:143 cont'd] *We did not appoint the direction you were facing, except that We might know, who followed the Messenger from him who turned on his heels — though it were a grave thing, save for those whom God has guided; but God would never cause your faith to be wasted; truly, God is Gentle with people, Merciful.*

He explained that the decree in determining the matter of the *qibla* up to the time of the change, and then at the time of the substitution, was a test for them from the Real in order to distinguish the sincere (*ṣādiq*) from the one who reneges (*māriq*). To those who viewed the matter with the eye of separation (*tafriqa*), the change was intolerable. To those who looked with the eye of reality (*ḥaqīqa*), the true sense appeared to their inner sight. Then He said: **but God would never cause your faith to be wasted**, i.e., for those who are with God in all states

<sup>336</sup> Basyūnī notes that al-Qushayrī means the 'people of realities' (*ahl al-ḥaqā'iq*) here.

<sup>337</sup> The translation follows the wording in MSS K117, f. 18b and Y101, f. 24a in this sentence and the one that follows.



with one heart, the differences in their states are one, whether He causes change or stillness, makes firm or shifts, confirms or changes – they are through Him for Him in all states. The one who spoke for them said:

*However the glass turns*

*we turn.*

*The ignorant think*

*we have become crazed.*<sup>338</sup>

Whether they face the east or west, whether they turn towards a stone or approach dry earth, the goal of their hearts is one and what belongs to the One, so the decree of everything in it is one.

**[2:144] *We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven; now We will surely turn you to a direction (qibla) that shall satisfy you. Turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are turn your faces towards it.***

[Muḥammad] (ﷺ) held to good manners when he kept his tongue silent from requesting the *qibla* he wished for in his heart. So he looked to the heaven because it is the path of Gabriel (‘a) and God (may He be exalted and glorified) revealed: ***We have indeed seen you turning your face about in the heaven***, i.e., ‘We know the wish you have not expressed in prayer and We have already changed the *qibla* for your sake. This is an extraordinary thing that the beloved does for the sake of the beloved’.

‘***We shall surely turn you to a direction that shall satisfy you***: Every servant strives in seeking My pleasure and I am seeking your pleasure, [Muḥammad]. ***Turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque*** but do not attach your heart to the stones and traces (*āthār*): devote your heart to Me. Let the *qibla* be the goal of your bodily self and the Real the object of your heart’s witnessing. ***Wherever you are (O believers) turn your faces towards it***, but dedicate your hearts to Me and let your witnessing be only through Me’.

**[2:144 cont’d] *Those who have been given the Scripture know that it is the truth from their Lord; God is not heedless of what they do.***

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<sup>338</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Mālīk b. Asmā’ and also to Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p. 113).

‘But it is not knowledge that will be a proof for them, nor is there any comfort for them in it or increase from it. God is not heedless of what you do<sup>339</sup> in bringing fear to the enemies and providing hope for the friends’.

**[2:145] *Yet if you should bring to those who have been given the Scripture every sign, they will not follow your direction, and you are not a follower of their direction; neither are they followers of one another’s direction. If you were to follow their whims after the knowledge that has come to you, then you will surely be among the evildoers.***

‘Devotion to the path of the Real was already yours from the eternal decree, as was the falling to the side of distance for your enemies. Between the two of you *there is a barrier (barzakh)*. *They do not overstep* [55:19-20]. They will not be followers of your *qibla* even if you were to show them effects (*āthār*) that were clearer than suns and moons. And you will not be followers of their *qibla*, even if they bring every stratagem. In that there is a decree from God (s) from pre-eternity’.

**[2:146] *Those to whom We have given the Scripture, they recognize him, as they recognize their sons; even though there is a party of them that conceal the truth, while they know.***

Their hidden envy causes haughtiness in them concerning what they necessarily know.<sup>340</sup> Similarly whoever has been defeated in the darknesses of his lower self throws off the cloak of bashfulness. There is no use censuring him; words will not rein in his abandon.

**[2:147] *The truth comes from your Lord; then be not among the doubters.***

i.e., ‘after the suns of certainty have appeared to you, do not yield to the results of mere guessing’. The address is to [the Prophet] but what is intended by it is the community.

**[2:148] *Every person has his direction to which he turns, so vie with one another in good works. Wherever you may be, God will bring you all together; surely God has power over all things.***

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<sup>339</sup> The Qur’ānic verse is *what they do* but the text in Basyūnī, MSS K117, f. 19a and Y101, f. 24b clearly show ‘what you (plural) do’ in this section.

<sup>340</sup> Knowledge of something by necessity or compulsion (*bi’l-iḍṭirār*) refers to self-evident knowledge that cannot be denied.

‘The allusion in it is to the fact that every people are distracted from Us by something that comes between them and Us. So be you, O believers, for Us and through Us’. One of them recited:

*When preoccupation with their concern  
distracted me from you,  
I made you my preoccupation and  
you made me forget my concern.*<sup>341</sup>

**[2:149] *From whatever place you issue, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; it is the truth from your Lord. God is not heedless of what you do.***

‘Just as you face the *qibla* from wherever you are, whether you are near or far from it, likewise draw near to Us in your heart whatever your state, whether you are in good fortune from Us or afflicted’.

**[2:150] *From whatever place you issue, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it, so that there be not any argument from the people against you; excepting the evildoers among them;***

‘If you want there to be no pathway for anyone against you, no shadow to fall upon you from any created thing, and no hand to reach you with evil, then from whatever place you issue (*ḥaythumā kunta*), whithersoever you are (*aynamā kunta*), and whatever state you are in (*kayfamā kunta*), be for Us (*kun lanā*) and be from Us (*wa kun minnā*), for truly whoever occupies themselves exclusively with Us – nothing can get to them’.

**[2:150 cont’d] *and do not fear them, but fear Me;***

‘When they are effaced from their engendered existence (*kawn*) as mortal remains (*rusūm*), Our decrees (*aḥkām*) flow over them, so why should there be fear of them?’

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<sup>341</sup> Muṣṭafā cites what he says is the correct verse, which is attributed to *Majnūn Laylā*: *You distracted me from understanding the tale, except that which was about you, for you are my preoccupation.* (Muṣṭafā, no. 4, p. 92).

[2:150 cont'd] *and that I may perfect My grace upon you, and that you may be guided.*

The perfection of grace is to add unveiling (*kashf*) to kindness (*lutf*). The one whom He suffices through the exigency of His generosity (*jūd*) is below the one whom He enriches by the rightful due (*haqq*) of His existence (*wujūd*). Concerning the meaning of this, they have recited:

*We are in the most perfect  
happiness but  
only through you  
is the happiness made complete.*

*The [only] imperfection of what we are in,  
O people of my love,  
is that you are absent  
while we are present.*<sup>342</sup>

[2:151] *As also We have sent among you, of yourselves, a messenger, to recite Our verses to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book, and wisdom, and to teach you what you knew not.*

The sending of the Messenger was to open the gates of attainment, for it was in His (s) prior knowledge that the hearts of His friends would be thirsty to meet Him. There is no way for anyone to Him except through the intermediary of the messengers. Through sending messengers He charged some people with the burdens [of prescriptive law] (*kulaf*) and by the sending of messengers to others, He honored them with the arts of drawing near and approaching (*zulaf*). What a difference between one people and another!

[2:152] *So remember Me, I will remember you; and be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful towards Me.*

Remembrance is the immersion of the one who is remembering in the witnessing (*shuhūd*) of that which is remembered, and then it is being consumed in the existence (*wujūd*) of that

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<sup>342</sup> Muṣṭafā cites sources attributing the verses to the Caliph Maḥdī and al-Ma'mūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 16, pp. 61-2).

which is being remembered until no trace (*athar*) remains of you doing the remembering, so that it is said ‘so and so’ once was.

***So remember me, I will remember you***, i.e., ‘be consumed in Our existence (*wujūd*) and We will remember you after your annihilation from yourself’. God Most High said, ‘*For indeed formerly they had been virtuous*’ [51:16]. They were here for a time but they have become perpetually separate (*bānū dā’iman*).<sup>343</sup>

*The world is  
a beautiful [passing] event,  
so be a beautiful event  
for the one who is aware.*<sup>344</sup>

The path of the people of literal expression (*ibāra*) is ‘***So remember me*** by acts of conformity (*muwāfaqāt*) [to the divine command], ***I will remember you*** with special gifts (*karamāt*)’. The path of the people of allusion (*ishāra*) is ‘***So remember me*** in abandoning every worldly concern (*ḥazz*), ***I will remember you*** by raising you up in My reality (*ḥaqq*) after your annihilation from yourselves’.

‘***So remember me*** being content with Me instead of My gifts and favors (*afḍāl*), ***I will remember you*** by being pleased with you regardless of your actions (*af’āl*)’.

‘***So remember me*** – and it is by My remembrance of you that you remember, for without My prior remembrance your remembrance would not occur’.

‘***So remember me*** by cutting off attachments (*‘alā’iq*), ***I will remember you*** by the attributes of realities (*ḥaqā’iq*)’.

<sup>343</sup> Baysūnī references al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* here, in comments attributed to Yaḥyā b. Mu’ādh, ‘The knower (*‘arif*) exists separate (*kā’in bā’in*)’ and ‘The knower was but became separate (*kāna fa-bāna*)’. This is from the ‘Section on Knowledge of God’ (*bāb al-ma’rifati bi-Llāh*) (Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, vol. 2, p. 608).

<sup>344</sup> Baysūnī calls his version confused in form and meaning. The verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā. The translation here follows the version found in MSS K117, f. 19b and Y101, f. 25a: *innamā ‘l-dunyā ḥadīthun hasanun fa-kun ḥadīthan ḥasanan li-man wa’ā*.

It is said ‘**remember Me** belongs to everyone you meet, **I will remember you** belongs to those I address’. **Whoever remembers Me in a congregation, I will remember him in a congregation better than theirs.**<sup>345</sup>

It is said ‘**and be thankful to Me** for the tremendous blessing to you in that I said to you: **So remember me, I will remember you**’.

It is said gratitude is a kind of remembrance. In His words, ‘**and be not ungrateful**, the prohibition against ingratitude (*kufrān*) is a command to be grateful. Gratitude is a remembrance so He repeated for you the command to remember’. Three is the first term of multiplicity.<sup>346</sup> The command to remember much is a command to love for that is in the tradition, ‘One who loves something remembers it often’,<sup>347</sup> so this is, in truth, a command to love, i.e., ‘Love me, I will love you’. **So remember me, I will remember you**, i.e., ‘Love me, I will love you’.<sup>348</sup>

It is said, ‘**So remember me** in being humbled (*tadhallul*), **I will remember you** with favor (*tafaḍḍal*)’.

‘**So remember me** in being broken (*inkisār*), **I will remember you** in acts of beneficence (*mabārr*)’.

‘**So remember me** with the tongue (*lisān*), **I will remember you** with the gardens (*jinān*)’.

‘**So remember me** with your hearts (*qulūbikum*), **I will remember you** by fulfilling what you seek (*maṭlūbikum*)’.

‘**So remember me** at the door with respect to service (*khidma*), **I will remember you** by responding on the carpet of nearness in completing the blessing (*ni‘ma*)’.

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<sup>345</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives references to this *ḥadīth qudsī* from al-Bukhārī, al-Tawḥīd 15, al-Tirmidhī, Du‘ā 131, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 2:251, 354, 405, 413, 480, 482, and 3:138.

<sup>346</sup> Al-Qushayrī is saying that the command to remember is repeated three times in this verse: *remember me...be thankful to Me, and be not ungrateful towards Me.*

<sup>347</sup> Neither Basyūnī nor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān identify this as a *ḥadīth*.

<sup>348</sup> The first time al-Qushayrī says, ‘Love Me, I will love you’ in this section, the ‘you’ is in the singular. The second time it is plural. Qur’ānic verse 3:31 has the plural form: *Say: If you love God, follow me, and God will love you.*

‘***So remember me*** with the purification of the innermost self (*bi-taṣfiyati ’l-sirr*), ***I will remember you*** in giving kindness (*bi-tawfiyati ’l-birr*)’.

‘***So remember me*** with effort and care (*bi ’l-jahdi wa ’l- ’inā*), ***I will remember you*** with generosity and giving (*bi ’l-jūdi wa ’l- ’aṭā*)’.

‘***So remember me*** with the attribute of soundness (*salāma*), ***I will remember you*** on the Day of the Resurrection (*yaum al-qiyāma*), a day in which remorse (*nadāma*) will not benefit’.

‘***So remember me*** with awe (*rahba*), ***I will remember you*** by making the wish (*raghba*) come true’.

***[2:153] O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer; surely God is with the patient.***

‘Seek help through patience for the blessing (*ṣalāt*)’.<sup>349</sup> That is to say, ‘your being worthy of your Lord’s blessing (*ṣalāt*) is by your patience at the flow of the decrees of the Real over you’. For that reason God Most High said: *yet give good tidings to the patient* [2:155] followed by: *Upon those rest blessings (ṣalawāt) and mercy from their Lord* [2:157].

It is said that the patient are entitled to the ultimate treasures and the highest ranks inasmuch as they have attained the company (*ma ’iyya*)<sup>350</sup> of God Most High Who said ‘***Surely God is with (ma ’a) the patient***’.

***[2:154] And say not of those slain in God’s way: ‘They are dead’; rather they are living; but you are not aware.***

Life passed away from them in this world but they arrived at eternal life in the end. They are, in truth, living, finding all kinds of special gifts (*karamāt*) from God.

It is said they are living because God is the One Who takes over (*khalaf*) after them and anyone for whom God is the substitute is not dead. The one who spoke for them said about one who was created:

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<sup>349</sup> The word *ṣalāt* can mean the prayer of men or the blessing God gives to men.

<sup>350</sup> literally, ‘withness’.

*Verily through you 'Itāb has departed*

*for the sake of His way,*

*but he who remains belongs to Him.*

*Like Khālīd, he has not died.*<sup>351</sup>

It is said they are living by God's remembrance of them. By the beauty of His eternal remembrance, one who is the object of the Real's remembrance is not dead.

It is said verily their corporeal forms (*ashbāh*) are dispersed (*mutafarriqa*), but their spirits (*arwāh*) are proven true (*mutahaqqiqā*) through the Real (*s*). If their corporeal forms have been annihilated through God, their spirits have remained through God, for whoever is annihilated through God, his remaining is through God.

It is said they are living in the testimonial witnessings of exaltation, the cloak of awe upon them. They are in the shade of intimacy, delighted by His beauty in one moment and overwhelmed by His majesty in the next.

**[2:155-6] *Surely We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and diminution of goods and lives and fruits; yet give good tidings to the patient; \* those who, when they are struck by an affliction, say, 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we will return'.***

He tried them by blessing in order to make their gratitude manifest and He tried them by tribulation in order to make their patience manifest. He caused that which was [already] known of their state to enter into existence, marked them with the record that He had decreed, and established them with the attribute He [already] knew. He tried them with fear within which there was a clearing of their breasts, and by hunger within which there was a cleansing of their bodies, and by diminution of goods within which was a purification of their material blessings (*ni'ma*).<sup>352</sup> Through the afflictions suffered by the lower selves, their wages were magnified before God, and through the blight of fruits, their recompense was doubled from God.

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<sup>351</sup> Muṣṭafā says that the verse cited in Basyūnī is incorrect. He gives a version which is almost the same as the one found in the MS K117, f. 19b and Y101, f. 25b, which is the text translated here. The verse is attributed to the poet A'shā Hamdān, who is said to have recited it about Khālīd b. 'Itāb b. Warqā', (Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 48). The name Khālīd means 'one who lives forever'. The version of the verse in Muṣṭafā has the letters y-k in the first line, which would seem to be a typographical error for *bika*.

<sup>352</sup> The translation follows the word *ni'ma* from MSS K117, f. 19b and Y101, f. 19b rather than the word 'lower selves' (*nufūs*) in the Basyūnī edition.



***Yet give good tidings to the patient*** meaning those who do not oppose His decree in what He brings to pass.

It is said He asked ***fear*** of them in their seeking to avoid His punishment; then the suffering of ***hunger*** in their desiring His nearness and generosity; then the ***diminution of goods*** by giving alms and renouncing [the goods] in their looking to what is better than [goods] in obtaining knowledge of Him; ***and lives (anfus)***, in their submitting them to worship of Him; ***and fruits***, in their supporting the abandonment of that which they hope for in abundant material blessings. ***Yet give good tidings to those who are patient*** in seeking the beautiful in His decree and yielding to the flow of His power.

The demands of the Unseen will either be through wealth, the self, or near relations. Whoever devotes wealth to God will have salvation (*najāt*). Whoever exerts the self for His decree will have degrees (*darajāt*). Whoever is patient with the misfortunes of near relations will have recompense and stations of nearness (*qurubāt*). Whoever does not hoard the spirit from Him will have perpetual intimate communications (*muwāṣṣalāt*).

***Those who, when they are struck by an affliction*** face the matter with patience and even gratitude. Nay, [they are] even exultant, boastful.<sup>353</sup>

Whoever views things as property belonging to the Real sees himself as a stranger between Him and His decree, for the One who brought forth creation has more right over created beings than they do themselves.

It is said that one who looks to the misfortunes testifies to his self as belonging to God and [returning] to God. The one who looks to the One Who causes the misfortunes knows that what will be is from God, so he is a servant through God. What a difference between one who belongs to God and one who is through God. The one who belongs to God is patient and firm, while the one who is through God has relinquished free choice (*ikhtiyār*) and determination (*ḥukm*). If [God] strengthens him he is strong and if He effaces him he is effaced. If He causes him to move, he moves and if He causes him to stay still, he is still. He is annihilated from his free choices (*ikhtiyārāt*) and is moved this way and that (*muṣarraḥ*) in the grip [of God].

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<sup>353</sup> Al-Qushayrī is playing on verses elsewhere in the Qur’ān here, transforming a negative description of mankind’s tendency to be ungrateful into a positive description of those who are patient: *And if We cause man to taste some mercy from Us, and then wrest it from him, lo! he is despairing, ungrateful. \* But if We cause him to taste prosperity after some misery that had befallen him, assuredly he will say, ‘The ills have gone from me’; lo! he is exultant, boastful; \* save those who endure [patiently] and perform righteous deeds; theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward [11:9-11].*

[2:157] *Upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those — they are the truly guided.*

They attained their patience and their ability to withstand the demands of the divine decree by His prior blessings to them. It was not because of their patience or their endurance that they arrived at His blessings, for if not for His pre-eternal mercy, their obedience would not have arisen through the condition of servitude, for His prior solicitude is what brought pure guidance to them.

*They are the truly guided:* Because He blessed them in the beginning, they were guided in the end.

[2:158] *Truly Şafā and Marwa are among the waymarks of God,*

These sites and remains, these ruins and markings, are extolled and visited. One sets out for them because they are the ruins of the lovers where the vestiges [still] gleam:

*The passions of houses belongs  
to those who have lived in them.  
There is no concern or joy  
in the house itself.*<sup>354</sup>

Truly the earth of their path, even the dust of their footprints, has tremendous value for the lovers. Even the smallest bit of dust that falls upon the edges of their path is more precious than the most fragrant musk:

*And that is only because  
Umayma walked beside it  
in a group [of women],  
trailing a garment.*<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> There are several different versions of this poem in MSS K117, f. 20a, Y101, f. 26a, and Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 28.

[2:158] *so whoever makes the Pilgrimage to the House, or the Visitation, he would not be at fault, if he circumambulates them; and whoever volunteers good, God is Grateful, Knowing.*

Şafā and Marwa were favored in being close to the House. The running between the two became part of the law, just as the circumambulation became part of the law for the House. Just as the circumambulation is one of the main rites of the pilgrimage, so is the running. The neighbor is honored for the sake of the neighbor.

[2:159] *Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We have revealed after We have shown them clearly in the Scripture — they shall be cursed by God and by the cursers,*

The allusion in this verse is to those to whom the Real (s) has unveiled knowledge of the good manners of travelling and who have become stingy in revealing [this knowledge] to aspirants for the purposes of advice and guidance. In that moment they become loathsome. What is to be feared for them is that the blessing will be removed from their knowledge when they fall short in it, just as<sup>356</sup> when they hold back in imparting it to the deserving.

[2:160] *Except those that repent, and make amends, and show clearly — them I shall turn [relenting]; I am the Relenting, the Merciful.*

They compensate for their past negligence with a gracious turning back, take on the task of giving advice to the aspirants, and *show clearly* to them, with a beautiful way of showing and furnishing proof, the goodness of upholding certain modes of behavior. Surely the clearest proof of the clarity of your actions, and the truest testimony of that by which you call people to God, is that your behavior does not contradict what you have alluded to in your speech. God Most High said, ‘*And I do not desire to be inconsistent in what I forbid you*’ [11:88].<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> The version of this verse which Muṣṭafā cites is not the version found in the Basyūnī printed edition, but matches the MSS K117, f. 20a and Y101, f. 26a exactly, and is the version used for the translation here: *wa-mā dhāka illā an mashat bi-janābihi Umayma fī sirbin wa-jarrat bihi burdā*. Muṣṭafā gives two references for the verse but without an author. In the second reference, the woman’s name is ‘Azīza (Muṣṭafā no. 16, p. 48)

<sup>356</sup> The translation follows the particle *ka-mā* from MS K117, f.20a here.

<sup>357</sup> This is part of Shu‘ayb’s response to his people: *He said, ‘O my people, have you considered that I might be [acting] upon a clear proof from my Lord and that He has provided me with fair sustenance from Him? And I do not desire to be inconsistent in what I forbid you. I desire only to set things right so far as I am able...’* [11:88].

[2:161-2] *But those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving — upon them shall be the curse of God and the angels, and of people altogether. \* Abiding therein: the chastisement shall not be lightened for them, no respite shall be given them.*

The allusion in it is to those to who, after they have travelled the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*), find it fitting to return to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-‘āda*).<sup>358</sup> Then they are in the grip of this estrangement [from the path] and in this condition leave the world. Those are the companions of separation. There is no drawing near for their spirits or setting straight their calamity, no asking for mercy from anyone. They have lost in this world and the Hereafter. Gnats curse them in the air and stagnation in the water (*yal‘anuhum al-baqq fī’l-hawā’ wa’l-naq‘u ‘alā’l-mā’*).

**Abiding:** i.e. they remain forever in their contemptible position and insignificance without any lightening or relief, without kindness or favors.

[2:163] *Your God is One God; there is no god except Him, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*

He honoured them with the greatest honour in saying: **Your God**. The shaykhs of this group<sup>359</sup> said: The sign of the one whom He has prepared for the elect of the elect is that He says to him, ‘My servant’ – and this is more perfect than that. His saying, ‘**Your God**’, connecting His reality<sup>360</sup> to you, is better than His connecting you to Himself. This is because His divinity for you is without defect, while your existence for Him is as a servant, with only each defect and harm of yours to give in exchange. When did He say to you ‘**Your God**’? Was it at the time of your obedience, your movements and states of rest, your essence or qualities? Nay, it was before that in the eternity of eternity, time without time or season, trace or event.

The **One** Who:

there is nothing similar that comes close to Him,

there is no resemblance that approaches Him,

there is no partner who is related to Him,

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<sup>358</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 20a and Y101, f. 26a, both of which have the phrase *aḥwāl ahl al-‘āda*. The Basyūnī edition has *aḥwāl al-‘āda*. For a discussion of the term ‘people of habit’ (*ahl al-‘āda*), see the Translator’s Introduction.

<sup>359</sup> i.e., the Sufis.

<sup>360</sup> The translation follows the word ‘reality’ (*ḥaqq*) from MSS K117, f. 20b and Y101, f. 26a rather than word ‘attribute’ (*na‘t*) from the Basyūnī edition.

there is no companion who is on intimate terms with Him,

there is no associate who works hand in hand with Him,

there is no helper who assists Him,

and there is no combatant who opposes Him.

[It is] the oneness of the Real, the eternalness of the Source, the perpetuity of the Abiding, the endlessness of Might and the sempiternity of the Essence.

**One** in the might of His radiance, singular in the majesty of His splendor, alone in the omnipotence of His grandeur, eternal in the authority of His might, glorious in the beauty of His sovereignty. Whoever tries to speak at length describing Him becomes incapable of expression.<sup>361</sup> If it were not for the fact that He is the Compassionate, the Merciful, then the servant would be destroyed when exposed to knowledge of Him, at the first glimmer of the appearances of His might.

*[2:164] Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ships that run in the sea with what profits men, and the water, God sends down from the heaven with which He revives the earth after it is dead, and He scatters abroad in it all manner of crawling thing; and the disposition of the winds, and the clouds compelled between heaven and the earth — surely there are signs for a people who comprehend.*

He informed the hearts of the seekers among the rational thinkers (*aṣḥāb al-istidlāl*) and those who possess intellects (*arbāb al-‘uqūl*) of the evidentiary proofs of His deliberative power, the signs of His existence, and the marks of His lordship, which are His different kinds of acts. He drew their attention to the different aspects<sup>362</sup> of wisdom and evidentiary proofs of [divine] oneness (*waḥdāniyya*), within which He established demonstrative proofs that are subtle in expression and aspects of the evidentiary proofs that are precise in allusion. For there is no entity arising out of nonexistence, whether a person or ruins, trace or vestige, heaven or space, air or water, sun or moon, drop or rain, sand or stone, star or tree, that is not evidence of oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) and a means of access for those who direct themselves to His existence.

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<sup>361</sup> The translation follows the phrase “becomes incapable of expression” (*aṣḥāba mansūban ilā ‘l-‘iyy*) from the MSS K117, f. 20b and Y101, f. 26b. The Basyūnī edition has the same phrase except for the last word, which is ‘blindness’ (*al-‘amā*) rather than ‘iyy.

<sup>362</sup> The translation follows the word ‘aspects’ (*wujūh*) MSS K117, f. 20b and Y101, f.26b rather than the word ‘existence’ (*wujūd*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

[2:165] *Yet there be people who take to themselves compeers besides God, loving them as God is loved;*

These are people whom the Real (s) did not appoint as the people of love (*ahl al-maḥabba*). He kept them occupied with the love of other things so that they were satisfied with loving everything that their lower selves desired. They were satisfied with something made for them to worship, and something other than Him carved for them to love.

[2:165 cont'd] *but those who believe love God more ardently; If he were to see those who did evil, when they see the chastisement, that the might altogether belongs to God, and that God is terrible in chastisement.*

What is intended here is not to recall the idol worshippers' love for other things, but rather to praise the believers for their love. The need is not for you to increase your love so as to surpass the love of disbelievers for their idols. Rather the lover wants to remember his beloved as much as he can and finds everything that comes from the beloved beautiful.

It is said the reason for the superiority of the love of believers for God over the love of the disbelievers for their idols is that the latter love is from like to like, and it is expected that like will incline to like. But [the love of believers for God] is a love of One who is not like them, and that is more precious and more worthy.

It is said that [the disbelievers] love what they can see and there is nothing amazing about loving that which has been seen with one's own eyes. But the believers love the One who has comes in between them and their seeing,<sup>363</sup> a cloak of grandeur on their faces.

It is said *those who believe love God more ardently* because they do not dissociate themselves from God even if He punishes them. The disbeliever dissociates himself from the idol and the idol from the disbeliever, just as God Most High said, 'When those who were followed disown their followers' [2:166].

It is said the love (*maḥabba*) of the believers comes from the love of God for them, for that is more perfect. God Most High said, 'whom He loves and who love Him' [5:54], while their love for idols is a matter of whim (*hawā*).

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<sup>363</sup> Al-Qushayrī may be indirectly referring to a phrase in Qur'ānic verse 8:24 here: *God comes in between a man and his heart*.

It is said the love of the believers is more perfect and more ardent because it conforms to the command, while the love of the disbelievers conforms to whim (*hawā*) and human nature (*ṭab*). It is said that when their circumstances were prosperous and their wealth and influence wide, they adopted idols which were better than those they worshipped in their previous state of poverty. They used to adopt idols of silver when they were rich and abandon those of iron – this was how they measured things! For the believers, the ardency of their love for God was because they worshipped One God in good times and bad.

**[2:166] *When those who were followed disown their followers, and they have seen the chastisement, and the cords are cut away before them.***

When the first parts of the punishment appear to [the disbelievers], it will become clear to them that they have nothing sincere upon which to stand. As for the believers, they will have their lives,<sup>364</sup> possessions, spouses and children taken from them [but their sincerity will remain]. [The disbelievers] will be made to reside in the graves for a few years and then He will try them at the Resurrection through lengthy terrors and the questioning of actions (*ṭul al-ahwāl wa'l-su'āl*),<sup>365</sup> and then cast them in the fire. [But] He will grant lengthy days and lives (*ṭul al-ayām wa'l-a'mār*)<sup>366</sup> to [the believers] so they will continue to increase in their love for Him.<sup>367</sup> Because of that, He said, '*those who believe love God more ardently*' [2:165].

**[2:167] *And those who followed say, 'O, if only we might return again and disown them, as they have disowned us!' So, God shall show them their works, anguish for them! Never shall they exit from the Fire.***

At that time they will know the bitterness of the taste of the companionship of created things, but they will not be able to attain anything but anguish.

**[2:168] *O people, eat of what is in the earth, lawful and wholesome; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you;***

That which is forbidden, even if it is pleasing now, is contaminated in the end. That which is permitted, even if it is hateful now, is wholesome in the end. The pure and permitted is what one acquires while not forgetting the Real in the state of acquiring it.

<sup>364</sup> The word al-Qushayrī uses for 'lives' here is *arwāḥ*, which is usually translated as 'spirits'. For a similar use of the word, see his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:178 below.

<sup>365</sup> The translation here follows the text in MSS K117, f. 20b and Y101, f. 26b and f. 27a.

<sup>366</sup> The translation here follows the text in MSS K117, f. 20b and Y101, f. 27a in this sentence.

<sup>367</sup> In other words, disbelievers will face lengthy trials in the afterlife while believers will have lengthy opportunities in this life to have their love for God grow.

It is said that that which is permitted is what the gatherer obtains for His sake and acquires while witnessing the Real in every state. Anything that causes you to forget the Real or disobey the Real is from the *steps of Satan*.

[2:169] *he only commands you to evil and indecency, and that you should speak against God what you do not know.*

Because of his audacity towards God, he induces you to speak falsely about God.

[2:170] *And when it is said to them, ‘Follow what God has revealed’, they say, ‘No; but we follow what we found our fathers doing’. What? Even if their fathers do not understand anything, and they were not guided?*

There is no raising their eyes beyond that which is like them in form, class, kind and ancestry, for they are set on their way. Without a doubt they plunged into the fire on their path. Had they known that their ancestors had no intelligence to restrain them, nor guidance to unite them, they would have separated themselves from them as hostile and resisted them as oppositional. But the lights of insight were snatched from them and they were deprived of the proofs of certainty.

[2:171] *The likeness of those who disbelieve is as the likeness of one who shouts to that which hears nothing, save a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, blind — they do not comprehend.*

Without the ears of comprehension and acceptance, their bodily hearing did not benefit them. They descended to the status of animals devoid of discrimination. Whoever is content to be like an animal does not have much worth.

[2:172] *O you who believe, eat of the good things (ṭayyibāt) wherewith We have provided you, and give thanks to God if it be Him that you worship.*



The permitted (*halāl*) is that for which there is no [bad] consequence. The good thing (*tayyib*) is that thing, the blessing of which is not attributable to any created thing.<sup>368</sup> When the servant finds something that combines these two qualities, it is the permitted and good.

The true meaning of thankfulness to Him is that you do not take a breath in anything other than the pleasure of the Real, so long as the energy given to you by that [permitted and good] food remains.

**[2:173] *He has only forbidden you: carrion, blood, the flesh of swine; what has been hallowed to other than God. Yet whoever is constrained, not desiring, nor transgressing, no sin shall be on him. God is Forgiving, Merciful.***

He has forbidden in outward circumstances these specific things which have been hallowed to other than God. He has forbidden to the innermost hearts companionship with other than God, and even witnessing anything other than God. ***Yet whoever is constrained***, i.e., anyone who has not found a means to annihilation in the realities of the Real should not travel a way other than the way of the law. Either he will be effaced in God or standing by means of God, or acting for God. Otherwise he is a mere savage of no account.<sup>369</sup>

**[2:174] *Those who conceal what God has revealed of the Scripture, and sell it for a little price — they shall consume nothing in their bellies but the Fire; God shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, neither purify them; and theirs is a painful chastisement.***

The religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) seek the spread of the evidentiary proofs of knowledge while the friends (*awliyā’*) are commanded to preserve the trusts of the secret.<sup>370</sup> If [the scholars] conceal the proofs of different types of knowledge, they will be bridled with a bridle of fire.<sup>371</sup> On the other hand, if [the friends] divulge even a sliver from the secret, they are immediately distanced from the secrets and snatched away from what they have been given in lights. To each is a limit (*ḥadd*) and to each a command (*amr*).

**[2:175-6] *Those are they that have bought error at the price of guidance, and chastisement at the price of pardon; what makes them so patient for the Fire? \* That is because God has***

<sup>368</sup> Because it is provided by God.

<sup>369</sup> Literally, ‘the fourth is a savage of no account’.

<sup>370</sup> The word *sirr* has been translated here as ‘secret’ to contrast with the intellectual knowledge of religious scholars. Elsewhere, al-Qushayrī uses this word to refer to the innermost self.

<sup>371</sup> This would appear to be a reference to a *ḥadīth* transmitted from Abu Hurayra and found in Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī: ‘Anyone who is asked for knowledge and conceals it will be bridled with a bridle of Fire on the day of Rising’. (*Riyad as-Salihin* by Nawawi, <http://www.sunnipath.com/library/Hadith/H0004P0241.aspx>)

*revealed the Book with the truth; and those that are at variance regarding the Book are in schism, far removed.*

Truly those that prefer the other (*ghayr*) over the Unseen (*ghayb*), the creation (*khalq*) over the Real (*ḥaqq*), the lower self (*nafs*) over intimacy (*uns*), how hard are their hearts, how shameless what they love and seek, how cheap their worth, and how disgraceful for those who have eyes to see! ***That is because God has revealed the Book in truth;*** and made the decree and rule in it come to pass in sincerity, and brought them to that for which He prepared them, and established them on the way He has fashioned for them.

[2:177] *It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is [that of] the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and who gives of his substance, however cherished to kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the traveller and beggars, and for slaves, and who observes prayer and pays the alms, and those who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, those who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship, and peril are the ones who are truthful, and these are the ones who are fearful.*

The allusion is that external circumstances [such as which way one turns for the *qibla*] are not that important whereas information about God is precious. The copious recitation of litanies, even if they are exalted, is the business of old and weak people. Devotional acts of obedience, even if they are powerful, are what ordinary people do. Spending night and day in an abundance of tasks and exertions has great weight in becoming worthy of the reward, but knowledge of the Real is rare and precious.

What is mentioned in this verse about different kinds of beautiful acts (*iḥsān*) and aspects of issues of faith (*imān*): the giving of wealth, the purification of works, the connection to kin, holding to different types of protective arrangements and obligations, the fulfillment of contracts, and observing the limits, are of momentous effect and great significance, beloved to the Real as a law and what He seeks as a command. But the standing in of the Real as a substitute for you after your annihilation, and your being effaced from yourself as a witness (*shāhid*),<sup>372</sup> your being consumed in the existence of eternity, the suspension of the external markings (*rusūm*) from the familiar things (*musākanāt*) of your sensory awareness (*iḥsās*) is more perfect and higher in meaning because in unity (*tawḥīd*) no trace or vestige remains, and no other or remnant are left behind.

[2:178] *O you who believe, prescribed for you is retaliation, regarding the slain; a free man, for a free man, and a slave for a slave, and a female for a female. But if anything is*

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<sup>372</sup> See al-Qushayrī's discussion of this term in the section 'Witness' (*al-shāhid*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 246-7).

*pardoned any one in relation to his brother, let the pursuing be honorable. And let the payment to him be with kindness; that is an alleviation given by your Lord, and a mercy; and for him who commits aggression after that — his is a painful chastisement.*

The right of retaliation is prescribed in the law but forgiveness is better, so he who inclines to receiving his right in full is one who submits (*muslim*),<sup>373</sup> while he who renounces seeking his right is one who acts in a beautiful way (*muḥsin*).<sup>374</sup> The first is a possessor of worship and even servanthood. The second is the possessor of nobleheartedness (*futuwwa*)<sup>375</sup> and even freedom.

Retaliation according to the people of knowledge (*ahl al-‘ilm*) entails bloodshed. According to the allusion of the people of the story (*ahl al-qīṣṣa*),<sup>376</sup> their blood goes unavenged and their lives<sup>377</sup> are good for nothing. He said:

*The heart you caused to tremble  
gives praise to you,  
and the blood you made spill is proud  
to have been spilled by you.*<sup>378</sup>

The blood of the lovers shed over the carpet of nearness is the perfume<sup>379</sup> of the people of communion. The Prophet (ṣ) said: **The color is the color of blood and the smell is the smell of musk.**<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> The translation here follows the words *fa-muslim* found in MSS K117, f. 21b and Y101, f. 27b rather than the words *fa-musallam lahu* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>374</sup> Notice the connection between al-Qushayrī’s commentary on this verse and the last – he uses the concept of *iḥsān* to distinguish between the *muslim* and the *muḥsin* (*muḥsin* is the active participle from the verbal noun *iḥsān*).

<sup>375</sup> For al-Qushayrī’s discussion of this term, see the ‘Section on Nobleheartedness’ (*bāb al-futuwwa*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 472-479).

<sup>376</sup> Basyūnī identifies the *ahl al-qīṣṣa* in a footnote here as the lords of states (*arbāb al-aḥwāl*). Previously, in his footnotes to al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qur’ānic verses 2:69-70 and 2:80, he identified the *ahl al-qīṣṣa* as Sufīs.

<sup>377</sup> The word al-Qushayrī uses for lives here is *arwāḥ*, usually translated as ‘spirits’. For a similar use of the word, see his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:166 above.

<sup>378</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to al-Mutanabbī, although the two lines are reversed (Muṣṭafā, no. 15, p. 61).

<sup>379</sup> The word *khalūq*, which is clearly written and vowelled in MSS K117f. 21b and Y101, f. 27b, is preferable here to the word *khulūf* in the Basyūnī printed edition.

<sup>380</sup> This *ḥadīth* refers to the wounds of those who fought in God’s way and how they will appear on the Day of Resurrection. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad*, 2:384, as a source. It can also be found in al-Bukharī (vol. 4, book 52, no. 59 in this online *ḥadīth* database:

<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/052.sbt.html>).

[2:179] *In retaliation there is life for you, O people of pith, so that you might fear.*

In carrying out the retaliation there is life because when one knows that if he kills, he will himself be killed, he refrains from killing. In that there is life for the one who kills and the one who is killed.

But in abandoning retaliation, according to the allusive explanation, there is greater life because when one has been annihilated in Him (s), He is the successor for him and his life from Him is more perfect for him than his remaining with himself. When God has inherited from them and succeeded them, the remaining of the Successor is dearer than the life of the one who was annihilated.

[2:180] *Prescribed for you, when any of you is approached by death and leaves behind some good, is to make testament in favor of his parents and kinsmen honorably — an obligation on those that fear.*

The testament regarding one's wealth is recommended for anyone who has wealth to leave behind. But if one leaves nothing behind, what is the use of a testament? The circumstance of the wealthy is such that they bequeath by thirds at the end of their lives. The friends depart from their living entirely and therefore leave nothing but an aspiration (*himma*), which is separated from them and not connected to anything. Because there is no way for the aspiration to the Real and no attachment to any created thing, [the aspiration] remains alone, separate and disconnected. They have recited:

*As long as I am living I will love you  
and when I die  
my decaying bones  
will keep loving you in the ground.*<sup>381</sup>

This is their testament. One of them said:

...<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of these lines attributed to al-Shiblī (Muṣṭafā no. 5, p. 104).

And it is even as another of them said:

*The traces<sup>383</sup> tell that  
they left not long ago.  
They returned to their lands  
and my tears flowed for them.<sup>384</sup>*

**[2:181] *Then if anyone changes it after hearing it, the sin shall rest upon those who change it; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.***

Whoever distorts an utterance, the evil and harm of that becomes his due. His punishment is that he is denied the smell of the fragrance of sincerity. Whoever aids the religion (*dīn*), God aids him and whoever provides aid against the religion, God forsakes him.

**[2:182] *But if any one fears injustice or sin from one making testament, and so makes things right between them, then no sin shall be upon him; surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.***

The allusion in it is to the one who recognizes a weakness in one of the aspirants (*murīdūn*), or sees in one of the novices (*ahl al-bidāya*) a laxity of purpose (*qaṣd*). Or he finds someone giving counsel, speaking with pure sincerity, to someone who does not have the capacity for it. His view is that he is being kind to the aspirant by being indulgent, encouraging, coaxing and permissive towards him. This is not objectionable, for urging people to pure sincerity [on the path] in what is not yet firmly established in them has an ample reward. Showing kindness to novices when they are not yet firm in their resolve or sincere in their effort is a crucial element in seeking to make things right.

**[2:183] *O you who believe, prescribed for you is the Fast, just as it was prescribed for those that were before you so that you might guard yourselves.***

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<sup>382</sup> Basyūnī omits the verses because he says he was unable to read or correct them. Although the text in MS K117, f. 21b and Y101, f. 27b is legible, the meaning is obscure.

<sup>383</sup> Instead of the word ‘traces’ (*rusūm*) in MSS K117, f. 21b and Y101, f. 28a, the Basyūnī edition has *rasūl*, which may just be a typographic error, since Muṣṭafā does not repeat it (Muṣṭafā, no. 31, p. 31).

<sup>384</sup> The translation follows ‘for them’ (*lahum*) as found in MSS K117, f. 21b and Y101, f. 28a instead of *lahu* in the Basyūnī edition. Muṣṭafā gives a somewhat different version of the first line attributed to Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭālib (Muṣṭafā no. 31, p. 31).

Fasting is of two types: the external fast which is abstention from things that break the fast accompanied by the intention [to fast], and the inner fast which is preserving the heart from harm, then the preservation of the spirit from familiar comforts (*musākanāt*), and then the preservation of the inner self from considerations (*malāḥazāt*).<sup>385</sup>

It is said the requirement of the fasting of worshippers, if it is to be complete, is preserving the tongue from slander (*ghība*), and preserving the glance from viewing with suspicion (*rība*), as it is said in the tradition, ‘Whoever fasts, let him fast with his ears, his eyes...’.<sup>386</sup> As for the fast of those who know, it is protecting the innermost self from witnessing anything other than Him.

For those who abstain from the things that break the fast, the end of their fast is when night falls. For those who fast from everything other [than Him], the end of their fast is that they witness the Real. He (ṣ) said, ‘Fast to see Him and break your fast to see Him’.<sup>387</sup> [In this *ḥadīth* the letter] *hā*’ in his words (ṣ) *li-ru’ yatihi* refers, according to the people of realization (*ahl al-taḥqīq*), to the Real (ṣ).<sup>388</sup> The religious scholars (*ulamā*) say its meaning is ‘Fast when you see the new moon of Ramaḍān and break your fast when you see the new moon of Shawwāl’.<sup>389</sup> As for the elect, their fast is for God because of their witnessing God, and their breaking of the fast is through God, and their approach is to God and the One Who prevails over them is God and the One through Whom they are effaced is God.

[2:184] *For days numbered; and if any of you be sick, or be on a journey, then a number of other days;*

Whoever is present in the month fasts for God and whoever is present with the Creator of the month fasts through God. The fast for God leads to recompense, while the fast through God leads to nearness. The fast for God is the fulfillment of worship (*taḥqīq al-‘ibāda*) and the fast through God is the healing of spiritual desire (*taṣḥīḥ al-irāda*). The fast for God is an attribute of every worshiper (*‘ābid*) and the fast by means of God is the quality of every seeker (*qāṣid*). The fast for God is the practice of external things (*qiyām al-ṣawāhir*) and the fast by means of God is the practice of inner things (*qiyām al-damā‘ir*). The fast for God is abstention

<sup>385</sup> Presumably, al-Qushayrī means here ‘considerations’ (*malāḥazāt*) of anything other than the Real.

<sup>386</sup> Basyūnī gives the full text and states that it is attributed to Abū Hurayra and is found in al-Bukhārī and the other sound collections.

<sup>387</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Nasā’ī’s *Sunan*, Al-Ṣiyām sections 8 and 11, among other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>388</sup> They understand the pronoun ‘he’ or ‘it’ which the *hā*’ represents as referring to God.

<sup>389</sup> They understand the pronoun as referring to the new moon.

according to legal explanations ( *ibārāt al-sharī'a*)<sup>390</sup> and the fast by means of God is abstention through the allusions of reality (*ishārāt al-ḥaqīqa*).

Whoever is present in the month abstains from the things that break the fast, while whoever is present with the Real abstains at all times from witnessing created things.

Whoever fasts with his lower self is given to drink from the drink of Salsabīl and Zanjabīl.<sup>391</sup> Whoever fasts in his heart is given to drink from the drink of that which causes love through the blessing of affirmation. Those who fast with their innermost selves are those about whom God has said, '*He will give them a pure drink to drink*' [76:21]. What a drink! A drink that is not turned about in the hand but rather appears for one from kindness, a drink of becoming intimate, not the drink of a cup.

God Most High said, '*If any of you be sick, or be on a journey, then a number of other days*', i.e., for anyone who breaks the fast for these reasons, there is a fast of a number of other days equaling those in which the fast was broken. The allusion is to one who is ailing in the health of his spiritual desire (*irāda*) and returns to other than Him, either through a permissive interpretation (*rukḥṣat ta'wīl*) or because of a lack of strength or endurance, or a weakness in taking on the burdens of the decrees of reality. Then let his load be lightened until his resolve strengthens and his desire intensifies. At that time what was permitted to him in adopting [permissive] interpretation will be corrected in him. This is the *sunna* of God (s) in easing the way for novices. Their fulfillment of that will be obligatory at a later time.

[2:184 cont'd] *and for those who are able to do it, a redemption: the feeding of a poor man. For him who volunteers good; that is good for him; but that you should fast is better for you, if you but knew.*

The allusion in it is to those who have a remaining bit of power in themselves to dedicate to the demands of reality, but who nonetheless revert to lenience in the Sharī'a and descend into permissive interpretation. The amends prescribed for them is what is necessary for the situation. It is the abandonment of whatever one has left in fixed wealth (*ma'lūm māl*) and mortal state (*marsūm ḥāl*) so that he remains stripped bare before the One.

It is said that since He knows that the imposition of obligation (*taklīf*) necessarily entails difficulty, He lightened that for you in your heart by showing the days of the fast to be few,

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<sup>390</sup> The translation follows the word 'explanations' ( *ibārāt*) found in MSS K117, f. 22a and Y101, f. 28a, rather than 'acts of worship' ( *ibādāt*) in the Basyūnī printed edition, since it better contrasts with the word 'allusions' (*ishārāt*) in the latter part of the sentence .

<sup>391</sup> A drink and flavor of ginger of Paradise described in Qur'ānic verses 76:17-18.

for He said, '*for days numbered*', i.e., the duration of this fast is but a few days, so hearing about it should not alarm you. This is like God Most High's saying, '*And struggle in the way of God, a struggle worthy of Him*' [22:78], and then saying, '*and He has not laid upon you in your religion any hardship*' [22:78], i.e., He does not burden you with too great a difficulty in performing a struggle worthy of Him.

[2:185] *The month of Ramaḍān, wherein the Qur'ān was revealed, a guidance for the people, and as clear proofs of the Guidance and the Criterion; So let those of you, who are present at the month, fast it and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days.*

Ramaḍān burns (*yurmiḍu*)<sup>392</sup> the sins (*dhunūb*) of some people and burns the mortal traces (*rusūm*) of other people. What a difference between those whose sins are burnt by His mercy and those whose mortal traces are burnt by His reality!

The month of Ramaḍān is the month of the opening of the [divine] speech (*khiṭāb*), the month of the revelation of the Book (*kitāb*), the month of obtaining the reward (*thawāb*), the month of drawing near and affirmation (*ījāb*), the month of the lightening of burdens (*takhfīf al-kulfa*), the month of achieving intimacy (*taḥqīq al-zulfa*), the month of descending mercy (*nuzūl al-raḥma*), the month of granting blessing (*wuḥūr al-ni'ma*), the month of salvation (*najāt*) and the month of intimate conversation (*munājāt*).

[2:185 cont'd] *God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you:*

'Because He desires ease for you, you should recognize that He desires only ease for you'.<sup>393</sup> Among the signs that He wants ease for His servant is that He has brought about the search for ease. If He had not desired ease for him, He would not have placed a desire for it in him. The one who spoke for them said:

*If You had not wanted me to obtain  
that for which I hope and seek  
from Your generosity,*

<sup>392</sup> The word Ramaḍān and the verb *yurmiḍu* are from the same root *r-m-d*, which refers to the burning of the sun.

<sup>393</sup> The translation follows the wording in MSS K117, f. 22a and Y101, f. 28b. The printed edition seems to be faulty here, since Basyūnī has to add additional words to make sense of the commentary.



*You would not have taught me to seek.*<sup>394</sup>

He gave hope and confirmed the desire, and made that giving binding inasmuch as He said, ‘**and He desires not hardship for you**’. This was to negate the possibilities of other ways of thinking, leaving the true sense clearly spelled out.

[2:185 cont’d] *and that you fulfill the number*

According to the language of scholars (*lisān al-‘ilm*), [it is] ‘**that you fulfill the number** [of days] of the fast’. According to the language of allusion (*lisān al-ishāra*), [it is] ‘that in the clarity of the present state (*ṣafā’ al-ḥāl*) you become aware<sup>395</sup> of the fulfillment of the end (*wafā’ al-ma’āl*)’.

[2:185 cont’d] *and magnify God for having guided you and that you might be thankful*

‘in the final breath and that you might leave the numbered [days] of your life in the security of your faith. [God’s] granting of success (*tawfīq*) in completing the fast of your month is great but the realization (*taḥqīq*) that your life is sealed with felicity is greater’.

[2:186] *And when My servants question you concerning Me, I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me that they might go aright.*

The question of each one indicates his state. They did not ask about any decree, created thing, this world<sup>396</sup> or what comes next, but rather they asked [Muḥammad] about Him, so God Most High said, ‘**And when My servants question you concerning Me...**’ [These questioners] were not among the group about whom He said, ‘*They will question you concerning the mountains*’, [20:105], nor among the group about whom He said, ‘*They will ask you about orphans*’ [2:220], nor among the group about whom He said, ‘*They will ask you about the monthly period*’ [2:222], nor among the group about whom He said, ‘*And they will question you concerning the Spirit*’ [17:85], nor among the group about whom He said,

<sup>394</sup> Muṣṭafā says he was unable to trace this verse to any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 16, p. 28).

<sup>395</sup> The translation follows ‘that you become aware’ (*li-ta’rifū*) in MSS K117, f. 22a rather than *li-taqrinū* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>396</sup> Basyūnī notes that the manuscript he was working from repeats *lā ‘an dunyā* twice, so he changes one of these to *lā ‘an dīn*. The translation here does not include the phrase he adds since it does not occur in MSS K117, f. 22b or Y101, f. 28b.

‘They ask you about wine, and divinatory arrows’ [2:219], or ‘They ask you about the sacred month, and fighting in it’ [2:217].

These were a select group of people. ‘**And when My servants question you concerning Me,**<sup>397</sup> how could you answer them? This answer is not by your tongue, O Muḥammad. Even though you are the ambassador between Us and created beings, I will assume responsibility for this answer: **I am near**’. He took away the act of mediating from anyone other than Himself concerning nearness. He did not say, ‘Say to them I am near’, but rather He said, may His affair be exalted, ‘**I am near**’.

Then He explained what this nearness is. Inasmuch as the Real (s) is too holy for drawing near or moving away in terms of direction, or specification in any spot (*buq ‘a*),<sup>398</sup> He said, ‘**I answer the call of the caller**’. Verily the Real (s) is near, wholly and entirely, by means of knowledge, power, hearing and vision. He is near to the believers with respect to caretaking,<sup>399</sup> help, and answering prayer, but He is too exalted and holy to be near to anyone in essence (*dhāt*) or spot (*buq ‘a*), for He is uniquely without direction in any region, mighty without being described by substance or measure.

**I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me that they might go aright:** He did not promise to answer the one who might be considered worthy because of asceticism or [to answer] at the time of worship. Instead He said, ‘**the call of the caller when he calls to Me**, however he calls to Me (*kayfamā da ‘ānī*) and wherever He calls to Me (*haythumā da ‘ānī*)’. Then He said, ‘**So let them respond to Me**’, which establishes a responsibility (*taklīf*), while His words, ‘**I answer the call of the caller**’ is a giving of information (*ta ‘rīf*) and a lightening [of responsibility] (*takhfīf*). He spoke of the lightening before He spoke of the responsibility. So it was if He said, ‘When you call to Me, My servant, I will answer you. So answer Me also when I call you. I do not refuse your call, so you should not like to refuse My call to you. My answering you, My servant, with what is good, will prompt you to call on Me. It is not that your call prompts Me to answer you’. ‘**So let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me** and let them trust in Me for **I answer the call of the one who calls to Me**’. The one who spoke for them said:

*By the All-Mighty, I swear by the One*

<sup>397</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition in the middle of the phrase from the Qur’ānic verse. Although both MSS K117, f. 22b and Y101, f. 28b have a text to complete this blank, the meaning is obscure. The translation here, then, follows Basyūnī’s edition.

<sup>398</sup> The word ‘spot’ (*buq ‘a*) is used in one place in the Qur’ān, in verse 28:30, which describes Moses approaching the fire he saw from a distance: *And when he reached it, a call came from the right bank of the valley at the blessed spot from the tree, [saying] that ‘O Moses! Indeed I am God, the Lord of the Worlds’*.

<sup>399</sup> The Basyūnī edition has *tabriyya*, which may be a typographical error for *tarbiyya*. The MSS K117, f. 22b and Y101, f. 29a has a word which seems to be *rutba*, which doesn’t seem correct in the context. The translation here is of *tarbiyya*.

whose servant I am and  
to whom belongs the pilgrims  
and what ‘Arafāt encompasses:

I do not want a substitute  
other than you<sup>400</sup> as a friend,  
so trust in my words,  
for noble people are trustworthy.<sup>401</sup>

Then He said at the end of the verse, ‘**that they might go aright**’, i.e., ‘there is no objective in your being charged with responsibilities and your supplications other than your receiving right guidance (*irshād*) for yourself’.

**[2:187] Permitted to you, upon the night of the Fast, is to go in to your wives; they are a vestment for you, and you are a vestment for them; God knows that you have been betraying yourselves, and so He has turned to you [relenting], and He has pardoned you. So now, lie with them and seek what God has prescribed for you, and eat and drink until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at daybreak; then complete the fast to the night;**

He states that, in truth, those things which characterize human beings do not pertain to Him. Whether you are engaged in worship (‘*ibāda*’), which is the right of the Real, or in the rules of custom (‘*āda*’) of companionship with your mate, which is the goal of your lower self and worldly concern, both are the same for your state when there is refined behavior (*adab*).<sup>402</sup>

The verse was revealed regarding the unexpected slip of al-Fārūq.<sup>403</sup> He made that an occasion for a dispensation for all Muslims until the Resurrection. Thus are the rulings of the [divine] solicitude.

It is said that He knew there is no escaping worldly concerns for the servant, so He divided the night and day in this month between His right (*ḥaqq*) and your worldly portion (*ḥaẓẓ*). He

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<sup>400</sup> This addressee in this sentence is grammatically singular and feminine.

<sup>401</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to find these verses in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 37).

<sup>402</sup> The translation follows the word *adab* from MSS K117, f. 22b and Y101, f. 29a rather than the word ‘permission’ (*idhn*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>403</sup> A epithet of ‘Umar ibn Khattāb.

said, ‘As for My right, *complete the fast to the night*, and as for your worldly portion, *eat and drink until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at daybreak*’.

[2:187 cont’d] *and do not lie with them, while you cleave to the mosques in devotion [to God]. Those are God’s bounds; do not approach them. So, God makes clear His signs to people so that they might fear.*

He states that the place of nearness<sup>404</sup> is sanctified from the seeking of worldly concerns. He said, ‘When you are occupied with your selves, you are veiled through yourselves in yourselves, but when your business is with Us do not turn back from Us to yourselves’.

It is said the jealousy (*ghayra*)<sup>405</sup> of the Real (*s*) is at the times when serious business is mixed with fun. ‘Ā’isha (*ra*) said concerning it: ‘O Messenger of God, I truly love you and love being near to you.’ He (*‘a*) said, ‘Let me be, daughter of Abū Bakr, I am worshipping my Lord.’<sup>406</sup> He (*ṣ*) said to her: ‘I have a time wherein none but my Lord suffices me.’<sup>407</sup>

[2:188] *Consume not your goods between you in deception, and proffer them to the judges, that you may consume a portion of other people’s goods in sin while you are aware.*

When you turn to created beings in judging things, know that God is watching over you and His knowledge encompasses you. So situate yourself with shyness before the Real (*s*). Created beings know externals (*ẓawāhir*) but the Real (*swt*) is the One Who rules over the inner secrets of hearts (*sarā’ir*).

[2:189] *They will ask you about the new moons. Say, ‘They are appointed times for the people and the Pilgrimage’.*

The ‘moons’ (*ahilla*), the plural of ‘a moon’ (*hilāl*), are appointed times for the people for their activities and calculations. For the people of the story, they are appointed times for their various states (*aḥwāl*). For the ascetics, [they are] appointed times for their litanies (*awrād*).

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<sup>404</sup> The translation follows the phrase ‘place of nearness’ (*maḥall al-qurba*) found in MSS K117, f. 22b and Y101, f. 29a rather than the phrase ‘place of power’ (*maḥall al-quḍra*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>405</sup> For more on the idea of God’s jealousy, see the ‘Section on Jealousy’ (*bāb al-ghayra*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 512-518).

<sup>406</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 2:111, and al-Zabīdī’s *Iṭḥāf al-sādat al-muttaqīn*, 10:162, as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>407</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives ‘Alī al-Qārī’s *Al-Asrār al-ma’rūfa*, 299, as a source for this *ḥadīth*.

For the people who have been singled out, they are appointed times for their conditions (*ḥālāt*).<sup>408</sup> The one who spoke for them said:

*I count the nights,  
one after another.  
In the days of old  
I never really counted them.*<sup>409</sup>

Another said:

*Eight days have passed  
without meeting.  
I do not have the patience  
to wait more than eight.*<sup>410</sup>

Another said:

*Months go by  
and we have not noticed  
their midway points  
nor their ends.*<sup>411</sup>

[2:189 cont'd] ***It is not piety to come to the houses from their backs, but piety is to fear; so come to the houses by their doors, and fear God that you may prosper.***

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<sup>408</sup> In his translation of a portion of al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Michael Sells points out that he sometimes refers to *ḥāla* (with the added 'a' at the end) rather than *ḥāl*. Although Sells translates the first as 'condition' and the second as 'state', he suggests they are used interchangeably (Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 335, n. 15). That seems to be the case in the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* as well.

<sup>409</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes this verse, in a slightly different form, to Majnūn (Muṣṭafā no. 4, p. 122).

<sup>410</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to al-Buḥturī, speaking to Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Qumī (Muṣṭafā no. 11, p. 113).

<sup>411</sup> Muṣṭafā attributes this line to the Majnūn Laylā *Diwān* as well as two other individuals (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 62).

It means piety is not guarding external affairs (*al-umūr al-zāhira*) but rather piety is purifying the inner secrets (*taṣfiyat al-sarā'ir*) and cleaning the recesses of hearts (*tanqiyat al-ḍamā'ir*).

[2:190] *And fight in the way of God with those who fight against you, but aggress not; God loves not the aggressors.*

‘Let your souls be trusts for the Real: when He commands their restraint, restrain and preserve them. When He commands to commit them to fighting, do not hold them back from His command. This is the meaning of His words **but aggress not**: that you stop wherever you are made to stop and do what you have been commanded’.

[2:191] *And slay them wherever you come upon them,*

It means ‘it is incumbent on you to show enmity towards My enemies, just as it is incumbent on you to establish friendship (*walāya*) and assistance (*muwālāh*) with My friends (*awliyā'*). So do not spare them,<sup>412</sup> even if there are bonds<sup>413</sup> of kinship or close relation between you’.

[2:191 cont'd] *and expel them from where they expelled you;*

‘Firstly, **expel** [your] love for them and their friendship from your hearts, then drive<sup>414</sup> them from the regions of Islam so that they will be diminished’.

[2:191 cont'd] *sedition is more grievous than slaying.*

The allusion is that the ordeal that comes to hearts (*qulūb*) from the misfortunes of veiling is more grievous than that which comes to the bodily selves (*nufūs*) from the exertion of the spirit (*rūḥ*), because the passing away of the life of the heart is more grievous than the passing away of the life of the bodily self. This is because the life of bodily selves is through what is fitting and familiar to them, but the life of the heart can only be through God.

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<sup>412</sup> The translation follows the words *fa-lā tubqū 'alayhim* found in MSS K117, f. 23a and Y101, f. 29b.

<sup>413</sup> The translation follows the word *awāṣir* found in MSS K117, f. 23a and Y101, f. 29b rather than the word *rāṣid* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>414</sup> The blank here in the Basyūnī text has been completed with the word *az 'ijūhum* in MSS K117, f. 23a and Y101, f. 29a.

It is said *sedition is more grievous than slaying* means that remaining apart from God is much worse than remaining with<sup>415</sup> your spirit (*ruh*) and your life.

[2:191 cont'd] *But fight them not by the Sacred Mosque until they should fight you there; then if they fight you, slay them — such, is the requital of disbelievers.*

The allusion in it: ‘Do not disturb your moment (*waqt*)<sup>416</sup> with God, letting in the attributes that characterize the bodily and lower self, even if that be supererogatory acts of obedience. If a noisy preoccupation distracts you from God, remove that matter from your self by every means possible so that no attachment will remain for you that blocks you from God’.

[2:192] *But if they desist, surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The allusion in it: ‘When the clamor of your thoughts and the enemies of your self (*nafs*) cut you off in their separating you from Him and jostling you, give up<sup>417</sup> the chatter of the lower self (*nafs*) and stop its combative moves, for surely those who have been asked to protect the innermost selves (*asrār*) should not be attentive to the exertions of the lower selves (*nufūs*) in their various oppositional ways’.

[2:193] *Fight them till there is no sedition, and the religion is for God; then if they desist, there shall be no enmity, save against evildoers.*

The allusion in the verse is to combat against the lower selves (*nufūs*), for the worst enemy to you is your lower self (*nafs*) within you. That is to say, ‘Hold completely to the precepts of spiritual disciplines (*riyāḍāt*) until nothing remains of carnal human traces (*āthār bashariyya*). Submit the self (*nafs*) and heart (*qalb*) to God so there will be no opponent or combatant from within you, either by [your being] wary or receptive, by [your] directing or free choice, in any state. The vicissitudes [of life] will flow over you as He wills them and you will be effaced from making any choices aside from what comes with the decree’. When the self (*nafs*) surrenders there is no enmity except against those who are negligent (*arbāb al-taqṣīr*), but those who uphold the true affair are far removed from any obligation to compel.

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<sup>415</sup> The translation follows MS Y101, f. 29a here, with the phrases *tabqā ‘an Allāh* and *tabqā ma ‘a rūḥika wa-ḥayātika*.

<sup>416</sup> For a discussion of this term, see the section on ‘The Moment’ (*al-waqt*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 188-190).

<sup>417</sup> The translation follows the phrase *fa-sallim* found in MSS K117, f. 23a and Y101, f. 29b is translated here rather than the phrase *fa-lum* found in the Basyūnī printed edition.

[2:194] *The sacred month for the sacred month; holy things demand retaliation; whoever commits aggression against you, then commit aggression against him in the manner that he committed against you; and fear God, and know that God is with the God-fearing.*

The allusion in it: ‘When two of the rights of God face off, submit the moment (*waqt*) to the decree of the moment (*ḥukm al-waqt*), and turn with the allusions of the moment (*ishārāt al-waqt*). Beware of preferring one over the other in what you possess in your worldly portion (*ḥazz*) – even a little – for you will be veiled from witnessing the Real (*ḥaqq*) and the vision of your heart will be blinded. Everything that is closer to what opposes your whims and further from what attracts and pleases you, is in itself more appropriate’.

*And know that God is with the God-fearing*, those who fear the preference of their own whims over that with which He is pleased. When they act for God in what they do rather than for themselves, God Most High is with them with help. He said, ‘*If you help God, He will help you*’ [47:7].

[2:195] *And spend in the way of God; and cast not your own hands into destruction; but be virtuous; God loves the virtuous.*

The spending of the rich is from their wealth. The spending of the worshippers is through their lower selves in not holding back acts of worship and tasks. The spending of those who know is through their hearts in not holding back from His decrees. The spending of the lovers is through their spirits in not holding back from His love.<sup>418</sup>

The spending of the rich is from blessings (*ni‘am*) and the spending of the poor is from aspirations (*himam*).

The spending of the rich is taking money from the purse. The spending of the poor is taking [concern for] the rich from the heart.<sup>419</sup> The spending of those who declare God’s unity is taking [concern for all] created things from the innermost self.

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<sup>418</sup> MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30a have ‘His decree’ (*ḥukmihi*) rather than ‘His love’ (*ḥubbihi*) here.

<sup>419</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30a here, with what looks to be *al-aghniyā‘ min al-qalb*.



The allusion in His words, '**and cast not your own hands into destruction**' is to the holding back of your hands from exertion, for the one who holds back his hands and hoards anything for himself, his hands throw him into destruction. It is said it is to prefer your whims to His good pleasure.

It is also said, '**and cast not your own hands into destruction**' means being unmindful of Him through free choice.

It is also said [it is] imagining that you live without His kindness and His responsiveness for even a moment.

It is also said [it is] contentment in your state of lassitude and being veiled.

It is also said [it is] holding the tongue from perpetually seeking help in every breath.

His words, '**But be virtuous, God loves the virtuous (muḥsinūn)**': Virtuousness (*iḥsān*) is that you are kind with everyone but yourself, for your virtuousness towards your lower self is in a form that the thinking of those with poor judgment<sup>420</sup> consider acting badly towards it. But through it you bring about every misery and endure every calamity. Virtuousness is also leaving every last bit of your worldly concerns, and devoting yourself to fulfilling the right of any one whose affair is connected to you. Virtuousness is that you worship Him without being neglectful and that you worship Him through the quality of witnessing.

#### [2:196] *Fulfill the Pilgrimage and the Visitation to God;*

The fulfillment of the Pilgrimage according to the language of scholars is the performance of its basic elements, its practice, its form, and the shedding of blood<sup>421</sup> which is required in it without abridging any of the conditions. It is mentioned in the *tafsīr* literature that you are forbidden from the dwellings of your family in both [the Pilgrimage and the Visitation].

In the language of allusion the pilgrimage is the quest (*qaṣd*). The quest is to the House of the Real and the quest to the Real. The first is the pilgrimage of ordinary people and the second is the pilgrimage of the elect. Just as the one who makes the pilgrimage through his bodily self

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<sup>420</sup> The translation follows the word *aghmār* in MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30a here rather than the word *i'timād* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>421</sup> i.e., the sacrifice of an animal which is performed at the end of the Hajj.

enters the consecrated state and stands [at ‘Arafāt], circumambulates the House and runs [between Šafā and Marwa], and then shaves [his head], so it is with the one who makes the pilgrimage through his heart. His state of consecration (*iḥrām*)<sup>422</sup> is through sound resolve (‘*‘aqd ṣaḥīḥ*’) on a pure quest (*qaṣd ṣarīḥ*). Then he removes the clothing of his oppositional aspects and his carnal passions. He then wraps himself in the two robes of patience and poverty. His holding back is from pursuing his worldly fortunes in following whims, and letting go of thoughts of desire, etc. Then [just as] as the pilgrim becomes more unkempt and dusty, likewise the traces of humility and submission appear upon [the pilgrim of the heart]. Then the *talbiya*<sup>423</sup> of the innermost selves is in the responding of every part of you.

‘The most excellent of the actions of the pilgrimage (*hajj*) is the sacrificial blood-letting (*thajj*) and the crying out (‘*‘ajj*’)’.<sup>424</sup> The *thajj* is the pouring of blood [of the animal sacrificed] and the ‘*‘ajj*’ is raising the voice in *talbiya*. Likewise, the shedding of the blood of the lower self is with the knives of opposition [to it], and the raising of the voices of the innermost self is in the continuous seeking of [God’s] help and the beauty of the response. Then [there is the] standing at the plains of nearness, seeking perfection in the attributes of awe. The standing place of the bodily selves is ‘Arafāt, while the standing place of hearts are the names and attributes belonging to the majesty of the Essence at the time of intimate communications. Then [there is] the circumambulation of the hearts around the sites of majesty. The running of the innermost selves is between the two hills<sup>425</sup> of the unveiling of the Sublimity (*jalāl*) and the kindness of the Beauty (*jamāl*). Then the completion [of the rites] is through cutting the ties of wishes and free choices, desires and resistances, in every way.

[2:196] *but if you are prevented, then [give] such offering as may be feasible,*

Being prevented may be from one of two causes, either an enemy or illness.

The allusion in it is if an enemy overcomes the lower self, you will find no escape but to dismount in the courtyard of indulgences (*rukhas*) or rational interpretive license (*ta’wīlāt al-‘ilm*). At that moment this will be permitted to you because of [your] excuse and necessity since there is no wrangling with the decree (*ḥukm*). The **offering** is that which one gives at this time, paying the determined amount and giving it to the poor, and waiting for the restriction to pass so that the affair can resume.

<sup>422</sup> *Iḥrām* refers to the special garment worn by pilgrims, and to the state of abstention from all the things prohibited while on Hajj.

<sup>423</sup> The *talbiya* is the prayer pilgrims say as they approach Mecca: ‘Here I am, O God, here I am...’ (*labbayka Llāhumma labbayk...*).

<sup>424</sup> I’ve followed MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30a here because the wording more closely resembles the *ḥadīth* Lane cites in his entry on *thajj*: *afḍal al-ḥajj al-‘ajj wa’l-thajj* (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* 1:332). In the Basyūnī printed edition, the word is *shajj* instead of *thajj*.

<sup>425</sup> Literally, *saffayy* ‘two rocks’, from the same word as al-Šafā.

If spiritual desires (*irādāt*)<sup>426</sup> become infirm, the seeking (*quṣūd*) weak, and the affair has reverted to [mere] obligation (*taklīf*), let such a one strive to not turn away, just as in the external pilgrimage one strives not to turn away because of an illness or if one needs clothes or the shaving, etc., through the required expiation. Then if he is weak, his stopping place must be where he deems it, and so he stands and sits in the directions of the quest (*awṣāf al-qaṣd*) and the precepts of spiritual desire (*aḥkām al-irāda*). If he turns back – may God protect us – he will meet only rejection and obstruction’. It is said:

*Our separating from one another*

*was not from hatred.*<sup>427</sup>

*Rather it is the passage of time (dahr)*

*that breaks up and draws together.*<sup>428</sup>

Someone else said:

*I am not – even though I love someone*

*who resides in space –*

*the first to hope*

*for something unattainable.*<sup>429</sup>

[2:196 cont’d] ***and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its place. If any of you is sick, or has an ailment of the head, then a redemption by fast, or a voluntary almsgiving, or a ritual sacrifice.***

One makes a sacrifice to the degree that one is able, expending all that one can. One should have the vestiges of grief and be filled with the sorrows of being veiled.

<sup>426</sup> ‘Spiritual desires (*irādāt*)’ from MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30b makes more sense in the context than the word *wāridāt* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>427</sup> The text in the Basyūnī edition, MSS K117, f. 23b and Y101, f. 30b reads: *Our drawing near (taqarrub) to one another was not from hatred*. Muṣṭafā states that this part of the verse can be found in al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣufiyya*, but reads: *The separation (qaṭī‘) between us was not from hatred*. Since this makes more sense, the translation here uses the word ‘separating’ rather than ‘drawing near’.

<sup>428</sup> The verse is cited in al-Sulamī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣufiyya* without attribution, according to Muṣṭafā (Muṣṭafā no. 3, p. 77).

<sup>429</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the verse to several sources, all of which cite the verse without attribution. He also cites a somewhat similar verse from *Majnūn Laylā*. (Muṣṭafā no. 36, p. 100).

*If any of you is sick...:* the allusion in it is that one humbles oneself and exerts oneself in circumambulating the friends [of God], serving the poor (*fuqarā'*), and drawing near through what one is capable of in the various ways<sup>430</sup> of striving and supplicating.

[2:196 cont'd] *When you are secure, then whoever enjoys the Visitation, until the Pilgrimage; let his offering be such as is feasible, or if he finds none, then a fast of three days in the Pilgrimage. And of seven when you return; that is a full ten; that is for him whose family are not present at the Sacred Mosque. And fear God, and know that God is severe in retribution.*

‘When the moons of the questing appear from the unveilings of magnification, and the concealing veils are removed from the suns of union, and the light of the approach rises within the days of standing [at ‘Arafāt], let him start anew from the union at that moment, and let him spread out a carpet for nearness. Let him renew the performance energetically by virtue of happiness, and let him say, “Come to joy for the days of testing are over!” Let him complete the Pilgrimage and the Visitation and let him continue to perform the precepts of companionship and service’.

*And know that God is severe in retribution* in veiling those who have not been shown the new moons of union and approach.

[2:197] *The Pilgrimage is in months well-known;*

The Pilgrimage for the outward selves (*nufūs*) is in months well-known. The *iḥrām* is only binding in it, and it is not possible to do the Pilgrimage throughout the entire year but only in a specific time period. One for whom that time has passed, the Pilgrimage has passed him. Likewise the Pilgrimage of the hearts has its times well-known and is only appropriate in them. These are the days of youth, for one who has no spiritual desire (*irāda*) in his youth, has no communion in the state of his old age. Likewise the one for whom the time of his quest (*qaṣd*) and spiritual desire (*irāda*) has passed, only the worship whose outcome is the Garden is appropriate, not the spiritual desire (*irāda*) whose outcome is communion.

[2:197 cont'd] *whoever undertakes the duty of Pilgrimage during them, then no lewdness, nor wickedness, or disputing in the Pilgrimage.*

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<sup>430</sup> The translation here follows the word *wujūh* from MSS K117, f. 24a and Y101, f. 30b rather than ‘existence’ (*wujūd*) in the Basyūnī edition.

The allusion is also to whoever travels the path of spiritual desire, that he should not stop at anything in the path nor mix his spiritual desire with anything. Whoever argues, opposes, or wrangles with him – he lets them all have their way. He will not dispute with anyone for the sake of this world, nor compete with anyone for some worldly fortune for the self or honor. God Most High said, ‘*And when the ignorant address them, they say “peace”*’ [25:63].

[2:197 cont’d] *Whatever good you do, God knows it.*

You should be content with His knowing and His judging rather than being seen, judged or known by His creatures.

[2:197 cont’d] *And take provision. But the best provision is piety; and fear you Me, O people of pith!*

The piety of ordinary people is avoidance of errors, while the piety of the elect is avoidance of anything other [than God] in the inner secrets of their hearts.

[2:198] *You would not be at fault if you should seek bounty from your Lord;*

The allusion in it is that whatever you seek from the bounty of God from what has been determined for you according to the decree of His due (*ḥaqq*), within which will be a portion for the Muslims or the power of the religion (*dīn*), is praiseworthy (*maḥmūd*). Whatever you seek for the fulfillment of your worldly fortune (*ḥazz*) or your own portion is a weak diversion (*ma’lūl*).

[2:198 cont’d] *but when you press on from ‘Arafāt, then remember God at the Sacred Waymark; and remember Him as He has guided you, though previously you were astray.*

The allusion in it is to when you have gone so far as to perform what He requested, remember His favor with you, for if He had not desired you, you would not have desired Him. If He had not chosen you, you would not have preferred His good pleasure.

[2:199] *Then press on from where the people press on, and seek God’s forgiveness; God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The allusion in it is that you do not know yourself by that which distinguishes you from others outwardly – not by any manner of dressing or patched clothing you put on.<sup>431</sup> Rather, you are like any other human being. When the thought comes to you that you have done something, or that anything is through you, for you or with you, seek God's forgiveness and renew your faith for it is a hidden idolatry (*shirk*) which infects your heart.

[2:200] *And when you have performed your holy rites, remember God as you remember your fathers, or yet more intensely.*

*And when you have performed your holy rites* is an allusion to carrying out the due of servanthood (‘*ubudiyya*). *Remember God as you remember your fathers* is an allusion to carrying out the due of love (*maḥabba*). The performance of your holy rites is undertaken by the self (*nafs*).

*Remember God as you remember your fathers* is [something] one carries out for Him in the heart continuously in the moment (*waqt*) and with full engagement throughout the span of one's life (‘*umr*).

It is said that, ‘Just as others boast of their fathers and delight in their ancestors, let your boasting and delight be in Us’.

It is said that, ‘If your fathers have a right to raise and educate you, Our right over you is even more binding since Our favors to you are more perfect’.

It is said, ‘If your ancestors have glorious deeds and virtues, Our worthiness from the attributes of Sublimity (*jalāl*) are far above any excellent state of your ancestors’.

It is said that, ‘If you never grow weary of remembering your father and you rarely forget him, then remember Us continually and do not let weariness, boredom or forgetfulness stop you’.

It is said that, ‘If someone speaks ill of your lineage, you are not pleased. Similarly, do not listen to the words of those who err and contrive, and defend Us’.

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<sup>431</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘put on’ (*waḍa‘a*) found in MSS K117, f. 24a and Y101, f. 31a rather than the phrase ‘nor quality’ (*wa-lā bi-ṣifa*) found in the Basyūnī edition. Patched clothing is something frequently associated with Sufīs in writings from this time period.

It is said that, ‘The father is remembered with respect and deference. Similarly, remember Us in awe along with the remembrance of the kindness of nearness through the best of caring’.

He said: **Remember God as you remember your fathers** but did not say ‘your mothers’ because the father is remembered out of respect and the mother is remembered out of compassion for her. God shows mercy. He is not shown mercy.

**Or yet more intensely** because the Real (*ḥaqq*) is more deserving (*aḥaqq*). You might be much estranged from your father while the Real (*s*) is far removed from any thought of one who has knowledge of Him to oppose what has been made obligatory in even the smallest way.

**As you remember your fathers**, the father according to what is due him, and the Lord according to what is due Him.

[2:200 cont’d] ***There are some people who say, ‘Our Lord, give to us in this world’; such people will have no part in the Hereafter.***

If a human being were to say this address to you, it would be a complaint.<sup>432</sup> If [God] was complaining about you [Muḥammad], just as he complained to you, it would be a bad situation. But by His favor, He has caused you [Muḥammad] to reach a place where He complains to you, so He said, ‘There are some people who do not turn their hearts towards Us and are content to be without Us. They do not look to anyone but themselves and their worldly concerns. Faith is not possible for them in their Lord and His due’.

[2:201] ***And there are others who say, ‘Our Lord, give to us in this world good, and good in the Hereafter, and guard us against the chastisement of the Fire’.***

He means in [this verse] **good (ḥasana)**, the existence of which is consistent with all good things. The **good** by which all good things are obtained in this world is the protection of faith for them in the end. Surely whoever leaves this world as a believer will not remain in the Fire and the passing of this [world] will be of little consequence. The **good** which is consistent with the good things of the Hereafter is forgiveness, for when He forgives, there is nothing but every good after it.

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<sup>432</sup> Basyūnī has *kāna shākiran* which he says was *shākiyan* in the original. The phrase in MSS K117, f. 24b and Y101, f. 31a makes more sense: *lā kāna shakwā*.

It is said the **good** in this world is aversion to it and the **good** in the Hereafter is protection from dwelling in [the Fire]. The guarding is from the Fire and the fires of separation (*furqa*) since the [letter] *lām* in His saying *al-nār* is a generic *lām*, so they seeking refuge applies to both the fires of burning (*nīrān al-ḥurqa*) and the fires of separation (*nīrān al-furqa*).

It is said the **good** in this world is the witnessing by the innermost selves (*bi'l-asrār*) and in the Hereafter the vision by the physical eyes (*bi'l-abṣār*).

It is said the **good** of this world is that He annihilates you<sup>433</sup> from yourself, while the good of the Hereafter is that He returns you to yourself.

It is said the good of this world is the success granted [by God] in service (*tawfīq al-khidma*) and the good of the Hereafter is the actualization of communion (*taḥqīq al-wuṣṣa*).

[2:202] *Those — they shall have a portion from what they have earned;*

If it was good, good [will be received]. If it was something else, something else [will be received].

[2:202 cont'd] *and God is swift at reckoning*

For ordinary people when the time comes and for the elect at every breath.

It is said He mentioned two groups: those who say, ‘Our Lord, give to us in this world’ and those who say ‘Give to us this world and the next’. The third group which is not mentioned are those who are content with His decree, those who submit to His command, those who forgo every supplication and request.

[2:203] *And remember God, during certain days numbered. If any man hastens on in two days, that is no sin for him; and if he delays, it is not a sin for him; if he fears; and fear God, and know that to Him you shall be gathered.*

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<sup>433</sup> The translation follows the phrase ‘He annihilates you’ (*yufnīka* ‘*anka*’) found in MSS K117, f. 24b and Y101, f. 31b rather than the phrase *yughnīka* ‘*anka*’ found in the Basyūnī edition.



This is a description of the last part of the [Pilgrimage] ceremonies, the throwing [of stones] in the days at Minā. Because of what they have offered in the pillars of the Pilgrimage, He lightens their load by letting them choose the duration of the stay, adding [more time] or hastening to leave.

The allusion in it is to one whose lower self has been extinguished while his heart lives and [his innermost self]<sup>434</sup> is perpetually occupied with the realities of witnessing. If there is a falling away of something from the branches of devotions, there is in his perpetual engagement in the manners of being present (*ādāb al-ḥuḍūr*) a replacement for what has passed away.

***[2:204] And among people there is he whose speech in the life of this world pleases you; and who calls on God to witness what is in his heart; yet he is most stubborn in dispute.***

He states that for some people whom the Real (*swt*) has turned away from their hearts, He has given them skill in speaking outwardly. But He has also bound their hearts to the ropes of deprivation and they are covered by their own ignorance. There is no meaning at bottom in them and nothing of weight in what they say. One cannot rely upon their faithfulness, nor trust in them in any way.

The allusion is to the people of external appearances (*ahl al-zāhir*) who have not been helped by the lights of insight so they are bound to the precepts of the external world. They have no faith in this discourse and no insight into this as a whole. It is necessary to protect secrets from them, since they will only receive this discourse with disapproval. Peaceable people among ordinary people who have respect for this path and faith in the whole of this discourse are closer to this way by far than those who count themselves among the elect but are cut off from faith in this affair.

***[2:205] And when he turns his back, he hastens about the earth to do corruption there and to destroy the tillage and the stock; and God loves not corruption.***

The allusion in it is to those whose hastening consists only in seeking their worldly fortunes. They are not concerned with what has fallen from the grip of the religion or weakened in the bonds of Islam. After that, the cords of this world become stronger for them and the ties of their desires more pervasive for the prohibited things they have gathered and the debris they have acquired. When they retire to their whisperings and ruinous aims, they hasten to

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<sup>434</sup> An addition Basyūnī makes for clarification.

corruption through the judgments that tie one to this world and their use of those who help them in going about their affairs. God has removed insight from the hearts of these people.

***And God loves not corruption:*** outward corruption is whatever brings about the ruin of religious affairs and the proper ordering of worldly matters.

[2:206] ***And when it is said to him, ‘Fear God’, he is seized by vainglory in his sin. So Hell shall be enough for him — how evil a cradling!***

Those are peoples who have been seized by arrogance and no longer yield to equitable behavior. They turn up their noses at accepting the Real. When you enjoin such a one to decency, he says, ‘How can you say this to someone like me, when I am such and such?’ Then he turns it around and attacks you,<sup>435</sup> saying, ‘You have more need to be enjoined with decency and forbidden indecency,<sup>436</sup> because your condition is such and such...’ If God had granted success to help him or mercy had reached him, he would have been granted the favor of he who has been guided to seeing his error and informed of the evil of his attribute. And he would not have harbored enmity towards the one who gave him the advice, the traces of which remain in the heart for years.

God Most High said: ***So Hell shall be enough for him***, meaning the estrangement in his state, the darknesses of the soul and the constriction of free choice so that he does not hasten in anything except that which he desires. At every moment, over and over, he succumbs to the chastisement and trial. Then he is transported from this chastisement to the greater chastisement. God Most High said, ‘*And We shall surely make them taste the nearer chastisement before the greater chastisement*’ [32:21].

[2:207] ***But there are other men who sell themselves, desiring God’s pleasure; and God is Gentle with His servants.***

Those whom the properties of mercy reached and the prior events of fate raised up, prefer the good pleasure of the Real over themselves and submit entirely to their Protector (*mawlā*). ***God is gentle with His servants*** and because of His Gentleness they attain these states – they do not deserve His Gentleness because of these states.

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<sup>435</sup> Basyūnī’s edition has a blank in the phrase. The translation follows the text in MSS K117, f. 25a and Y101, f. 31b: *thumma yukarru ‘alayka ‘ātīfan*.

<sup>436</sup> The reference is to Qur’ānic verses 3:104, 3:110 and 3:114, where believers are urged to enjoin decency and forbid indecency.

[2:208] *O you who believe, come, all of you, into submission; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you.*

He has charged the believer with making peace with everyone except his lower self, for it makes no move except to oppose [the believer's] Chief (*sayyid*).<sup>437</sup> Anyone who makes peace with himself becomes listless in his spiritual struggles (*mujāhadāt*). That is the cause of the suspension of those who started out on the quest and the reason for the lassitude of those who initially felt spiritual desire.

*The steps of Satan* are what are whispered to you in your inability to fully uphold the precepts of good conduct and to abandon ill-advised inclinations that are best ignored. Rather it is as God Most High said, 'If you fear for him, cast him into the waters' [28:7]. Then look to what it was He did with [Moses] when [Moses's mother] cast him [into the water] and how He returned him to her after saving him.

[2:209] *But if you slip after the clear proofs have come to you, know then that God is Mighty, Wise.*

A single slip after the disclosure of clear proofs is uglier by far than the many slips committed before this disclosure. Those who are known as treacherous cannot be trusted. When the tribulation for the worst sins descends, it will bring their utter eradication.

[2:210] *What do they wait for that God shall come to them in the shadows of clouds, and the angels? The matter is determined, and to God all matters are returned.*

The people deemed the Hour to be slow in coming but were told of the severity of the matter in the details given. [What are described] are acts (*af'āl*) [of God] only in the sense of the terrible events (*ahwāl*) [of that Hour].<sup>438</sup> God (*s*) divulges them so as to remove their doubt concerning the sublimity of His affair and the implementation of His power in what He wills.

*The matter is determined, and to God all matters are returned*, i.e., the veil of the Unseen is removed from the unambiguous [divine] preordination (*taqdīr sābiq*).

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<sup>437</sup> See al-Qushayrī's commentary on 1:2 where he uses *sayyid* as a synonym for *rabb*.

<sup>438</sup> The translation follows the word 'terrors' (*ahwāl*) found in MSS K117, f. 25a and Y101, f. 32a rather than the word 'states' (*ahwāl*) found in the Basyūnī edition. Al-Qushayrī's intent here seems to be to avoid a literal reading of the verse. As he states in the last paragraph of the commentary on this verse, God 'is sanctified from every movement and coming'.

Because of the lights of insights in the hearts of those who declare His oneness, they have no need to seek interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of this verse and those like it, since the Real (*s*) is far removed from any change in locality and cessation, or specificity in place or time. He is sanctified from every movement and coming.

**[2:211] *Ask the Children of Israel how many a clear proof did We give them; whoever changes God's grace after it has come to him, God is severe in retribution.***

The benefit of questioning was to make them acknowledge the question of proof. Questioning them was not for the purposes of resolving any doubt on the part of the Messenger (*ṣ*) concerning what had been plainly established by proof.<sup>439</sup>

***Whoever changes God's grace after it has come to him, God is severe in retribution*** in taking this grace away. At that moment they will recognize its worth and will then mourn it as they will never attain it. The one who spoke for them said:

*You will leave*

*and abandon me.*

*You will seek*

*but not find me.*<sup>440</sup>

**[2:212] *Decked out fair to the disbelievers is the life of this world; and they deride the believers; but those who fear shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and God sustains whomever He will without reckoning.***

Unknowingly, they were deceived. The increasing darkness of their vision caused them to slander and deride His friends (*s*). When the error of ignorance is dispelled from their hearts at a moment in which they will experience despair,<sup>441</sup> they will come to know the one who is in a state of loss among those who have gone far astray.

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<sup>439</sup> The translation follows the text 'what has been established by proof' (*maḥajja*) found in MSS K117, f. 25a and Y101, f. 32a rather than the word 'love' (*maḥabba*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>440</sup> Muṣṭafā cites the verse but gives no sources for it (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 48).

<sup>441</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which has been completed with the phrase '*inda shuhūd al-ya's*' from MSS K117, f. 25b and Y101, f. 32b.

[2:213] *People were one community; then God sent forth the prophets as bearers of good tidings and warners; and He revealed with them the Scripture with the truth that He might decide between people regarding their differences; and only those who had been given it, differed about it after the clear proofs had come to them out of insolence, one to another; then God guided those who believed to the truth, regarding which they were at variance, by His leave; and God guides whomever He will to a straight path.*

It means absence from the Real was a point of unity in them. Then when He sent the messengers, they became distinguished by what they were given or deprived of from the lights of insight. It is said they were as they had been previously in the pre-eternal choosing, and became Jews or Christians as a people with the coming of the messengers. Then, in the end, each one will be returned to what was preordained for him. Verily all mankind was gathered together in His (s) knowledge, and then separated by His decree (*ḥukm*). Some people He guided (*hadāhum*) and some He led astray (*aghwāhum*). Some people He veiled (*ḥajabahum*) and some He attracted (*jadhahahum*). Some people He bound to disappointment (*khidhlān*) and some He opened to beneficence (*iḥsān*). It is not a matter of acquisition for those who are accepted, nor is there a cause for the rejection of those rejected. Rather it is a decree (*ḥukm*) that has been carried out and a divine determination (*qaḍāʾ*) that has been decided.

[2:214] *Or did you suppose that you should enter Paradise without there having come upon you the like of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, ‘When will God’s help come?’ Ah, but surely God’s help is nigh.*

God created Paradise and surrounded it with difficulties. He created the Fire and surrounded it with carnal desires and cravings. Anyone who is too shy to ride the terrors will be kept from realizing [his] hopes. Verily the Real (s) tested the ancients with the endurance of all kinds of hardships. He causes any one who has joined behind the friends to be included in their path and they share in their adversities

Anyone who thinks otherwise thinks a mirage is water. A dream<sup>442</sup> does not produce what one imagines by way of interpretation. The way (*sunna*) of God (s) has come to pass with the friends so that they only came to rest in the courtyard of victory after commanding the open spaces of desperation. Although their anticipation is prolonged, kindness comes to them all of a sudden and what they strove for is unexpectedly realized. God Most High said, **‘Ah, but surely God’s help is nigh’**.

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<sup>442</sup> The translation follows the word ‘dream (*ḥulm*)’ from MSS K117, f. 25b and Y101, f. 32b rather than the word ‘decree (*ḥukm*)’ found in the Basyūnī edition.

[2:215] *They will ask you about what they should expend. Say, ‘Whatever you expend of good it is for parents and kinsmen, orphans, the needy, and the traveler; and whatever good you may do, God has knowledge of it’.*

They know that the servant does not act alone in what he does, for surely the servant cannot do anything without the leave of his Protector. So apply yourselves in expending as elaborated in the permission, since servanthood is applying yourself wherever the command has you do so.

It is said they do not expend according to the suggestions of whim. Rather, they study the details of the affair and the indications of the law. The ‘and’ (*wāw*) in this verse in His saying, *and kinsmen and orphans* indicates a kind of sequence: first your parents according to what is honourable, then your kinsmen, then those who follow in the stated sequence.

[2:216] *Prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you. Yet it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you; and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you; God knows, and you know not.*

The engagement with fighting is difficult for the lower selves. He explained that their comforts are deferred because they follow the ordinance of discipline (*ta’dīb*). The opposite of this is the comforts of the hearts, which are immediate since they follow what is specified for drawing near (*taqrīb*). Happiness is in opposing (*mukhālafa*) the lower selves,<sup>443</sup> so anyone who conforms (*wāfaqa*) with them has abandoned the exemplary path (*al-maḥajjat al-muthlā*).<sup>444</sup> Likewise happiness is in conforming (*muwāfaqa*) to the hearts and anyone who opposes (*khālafa*) them deviates from the highest way (*al-sunnat al-‘ulā*).

It is better to accept the good news of the Real’s guarantee of ease than the anxious thoughts of the lower selves warning of impending difficulty and harm.

[2:217] *They ask you about the sacred month, and fighting in it. Say, ‘Fighting in it is a grave thing; but to bar from God’s way, and disbelief in Him, and the Sacred Mosque, and to expel its people from it — that is graver in God’s sight; and sedition is graver than slaying’.*

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<sup>443</sup> For more on this practice see the ‘Section on Opposing the Lower Self and Remembering Its Defects’ (*mukhālafat al-naḥs wa-dhikr ‘uyūbihi*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol.1, pp.349-54).

<sup>444</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘path’ (*maḥajja*) in MSS K117, f. 25b and Y101, f. 32b rather than the word ‘love’ (*maḥabba*) in the Basyūnī edition.

Among disobedient acts, there is that which is more intense than others and more difficult to conceptualize. Bad manners at the door do not bring about what they would bring about on the carpet. When the error occurs through the lower self, it affects it through the deferred punishment, which is burning (*iḥtirāq*). When the heart errs, the punishment is immediate, and it is through separation (*firāq*). The effect of heedlessness on hearts is more serious than the harm caused by error to the lower selves, for surely the lower self is kept from good fortune, but the heart is kept from the Real.

[2:217 cont'd] *They will not cease to fight against you until they turn you from your religion if they are able; and whoever of you turns from his religion, and dies disbelieving — their works have failed in this world and the Hereafter. Those are the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein.*

The allusion in this is to the people of heedlessness when they seek to lure you away, wanting to turn you towards their heedlessness. They will only be content when you break the contract of your spiritual desire (*irāda*) by returning to your previous state. Anyone who breaks (*fasakha*) his contract with God deforms (*masakha*) his heart.

[2:218] *Verily the believers, and those who emigrate, and struggle in God's way — those have hope of God's compassion; and God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Verily those who are sincere in their seeking and faithful in their contract will not turn back on their heels in [their] spiritual desire. These are the ones who live in the gentle wind of hope that they will attain the perfection of subsisting [in God] (*baqā'*) and the abode of meeting (*liqā'*).

[2:219] *They ask you about wine (khamr), and divinatory arrows. Say: 'In both is great sin and profit for men; but the sin in them is greater than the usefulness'.*

*Khamr* is whatever intoxicates the mind. Just as the intoxicant is prohibited, so drunkenness (*sukr*) is prohibited by the words of the Prophet (ṣ), '*Khamr itself is prohibited and drunkenness from any drink*'<sup>445</sup> From the point of view of the allusions [in the verse], anyone who is drunk from the drink of heedlessness deserves the same as the drinker of *khamr*. Just as the one who is drunk is prohibited to pray, so the one who possesses the drunkenness of heedlessness is veiled from intimate communications (*muwāṣalāt*) and the plainest testimonial evidence of ecstatic finding (*wujūd*). Anyone who does not think this is true should test it.

<sup>445</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives Abū Ḥanīfa's *Musnad*, 2:183 and 2:184 as a source for this *ḥadīth*.

The notion of gambling can be found in most of the transactions of the people of heedlessness when they follow the way of stratagems, deception, and lying in what they say. Generous commitment to truthfulness and equitable justice is rare and precious.

[2:219 cont'd-2:220] *And they will ask you what they should expend. Say: 'Comfortably' (al-'afw). So, God makes clear His signs to you that you might reflect, \* on this world and the Hereafter.*

It is said *al-'afw* is what is in excess of your needs. This is for the elect who take from the surplus of their wealth according to their capacities. As for the elect of the elect, their way is 'preferring' (*īthār*), which is to prefer others over themselves even if they are in need of what they give,<sup>446</sup> and even though the One they prefer is unseen.

[2:220 cont'd] *They will ask you about orphans. Say: 'To set their affairs aright; and if you intermix with them, they are your brothers;*

Setting their state aright with regards to their moral education (*ta'dīb*) is more perfect than setting aright their wealth. Patience in bearing with them through the giving of counsel, and abandoning one's weariness<sup>447</sup> in guiding them is better than being permissive to the point where it could be said one had not faced their obligation.

[2:220 cont'd] *God knows well him who works corruption from him who sets aright; and had He willed He would have harassed you. Surely God is Mighty, Wise'.*

He deals with everyone according to what dwells in a person's heart in intentions (*quṣūd*), not according to the external things acquired in all the various ways.

[2:221] *Do not marry idolatresses until they believe; a believing slavegirl is better than an idolatress, though you may admire her. And do not marry idolaters, until they believe. A believing slave is better than an idolater, though you may admire him. Those call to the Fire; and God calls to Paradise and pardon by His leave; and He makes clear His signs to the people so that they might remember.*

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<sup>446</sup> This passage recalls Qur'ānic verse 59:9, which describes some of the Muslims who helped the Emigrants from Mecca, saying: *they prefer [others] to themselves, though they be in poverty.*

<sup>447</sup> The translation follows the word 'weariness (*malāl*)' from MSS K117, f. 26a and Y101, f. 33a rather than the word 'wealth' (*māl*) in the Basyūnī edition.



Connecting to the rope of religion and holding fast to the protection of Muslims is better than being content to reach a limit<sup>448</sup> that enters upon disbelief. The concession of the law exists for this action, but the real indication is towards restraint by waiving the right to choose it. This concerns the women of the Book with whom it is permissible to have marital relations. As for polytheists, it is absolutely prohibited to have marital relations with them. It is a definitive judgment that cutting off relations with those in this category is obligatory.<sup>449</sup>

[2:222] *They will ask you about the monthly period. Say: 'It is an ailment; so part with women in the monthly period, and do not approach them until they are pure; when they have cleansed themselves, then come to them, as God has commanded you'.*

Not everything which is a cause for embarrassment and aversion is from what the servant freely chooses, for it might be among the deficiencies whose acquisition cannot be attributed to the servant, but rather is, from the beginning, a decree of the Real. Among these is what God destined for the daughters of Adam in this condition. Moreover, they were commanded to withdraw from the place of prayer during the times of this condition since the place of prayer is a place of intimate conversation (*manājīn*) with one's Lord. So setting a time in which the place of conversation is to be avoided is a decree from God, not a sin of theirs. In this is an allusion, for it is said that even if they are prevented from prayer, which is being present through the body, they are not prevented from perpetual remembrance (*dhikr*) in the heart and tongue. That is an address on the carpet of nearness. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, relating from God Most High, *'I am the sitting companion of him who remembers Me'*.<sup>450</sup>

[2:222 cont'd] *Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves.*

It is said He loves *those who repent* from sins (*dhunūb*) and *those who cleanse themselves* from defects (*ʿuyūb*).

It is said *those who repent* from error and *those who cleanse themselves* from imagining that their salvation is through repentance.

<sup>448</sup> The translation here follows the word 'limit' (*ḥadd*) from MSS K117, f. 26a and Y101, f. 33a rather than the word 'someone' (*aḥad*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>449</sup> The translation here follows the word 'obligatory' (*wājib*) from MSS K117, f. 26a and Y101, f. 33a rather than the word 'aspects' (*awjuh*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>450</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān gives al-'Ajlūnī's *Kashf al-Khaḥā*, 1:232, al-Zabīdī's *Iṭḥāf al-sādati 'l-muttaqīn*, 6:287, and al-Suyūṭī's *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī aḥādīth al-mushtahara*, 24, as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

It is said *those who repent* from doing forbidden things and *those who cleanse themselves* from familiar things and ordinary considerations.

It is said *those who repent* through the water of seeking forgiveness and *those who cleanse themselves* by the pouring of the water of shame through the quality of brokenness.

It is said *those who repent* from error and *those who cleanse themselves* from heedlessness.

It is said *those who repent* from witnessing the repentance and *those who cleanse themselves* from imagining that anything is by error rather than by the decree that originates from God Most High.

**[2:223] *Your women are a tillage for you; so come to your tillage as you wish; and offer for your souls; and fear God; and know that you shall meet Him; and give good tidings to the believers.***

Because the bodily and lower selves are defined by absence from reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), their finding rest with their mates is allowable where that has been permitted. But when hearts are in the place of presence (*maḥall al-ḥuḍūr*), it is forbidden for them to be with any others and created beings.

*And offer for your souls* those righteous deeds that will benefit you on the day of your insolvency,<sup>451</sup> and because of this He said, '*and know that you shall meet Him*'. So look to yourselves in offering what can be found that will ease the way for you before your Lord.

**[2:224] *Do not make God a hindrance in your oaths, to be pious and Godfearing; and to put things right between people; surely God is All-Hearing, Knower.***

Keep the mention of your Lord free of the banality of any worldly concerns.

It is said do not make the mention of God into a net for hunting the debris of this world.

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<sup>451</sup> In other words, there is nothing to send forward to the Hereafter but one's good deeds.

[2:225] *God will not take you to task for a slip in your oaths; but He will take you to task for what your hearts have earned; and God is Forgiving, Forbearing.*

What the tongue says inadvertently does not have much importance either for good or bad, but what is hidden in the recesses of the heart (*ḍamā'ir*) and contained in its inner secrets (*sarā'ir*) in sound intentions and strong resolutions – that will be taken to task. If it is good, there will be a beautiful recompense and if it is bad there will be prolonged distress.

[2:226] *For those who forswear their women, a wait of four months; if they revert, God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

If the right of companionship with one's mate is preserved for you, unless you relinquish it, He nonetheless holds you to His rule, so the right of the Real is even more a right (*haqqu'l-ḥaqqi aḥaqqu*) that must be protected. *If they revert*, i.e. they turn back to revive what they have let die and rectify what they have squandered, **God is Forgiving, Forbearing**. Because the wife has a lesser voice due to her being captive (*asīr*) in the hands of her spouse, God (*s*) takes charge of the affair in protecting her right and commands the husband to return to her or release her.

[2:227] *But if they resolve upon divorce; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.*

If he no longer wants the right of companionship and has confirmed his resolve to separate from her, **surely God is Hearing, Knowing**,<sup>452</sup> aware of his state and his secret. If any remorse comes to him, he should not cover up by denying<sup>453</sup> the divorce, for God (*s*) knows that he has divorced her.

When the separation is difficult, he provides solace for the woman, saying [He is] **Hearing**, i.e. 'We hear the one who is desolated by this talk' and this is a comfort for her from the Real (*s*).

[2:228] *Divorced women shall wait by themselves for three periods.*

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<sup>452</sup> The repetition of the phrase **surely God is Hearing, Knowing** has been added on the basis of MSS K117, f. 26b and Y101, f. 33b. It does not appear in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>453</sup> The translation follows the word 'denying' (*inkār*) found in MSS K117, f. 26b and Y101, f. 33b rather than the word 'elements' (*irkān*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

He commanded divorced women to wait, out of respect for spousal relations, meaning, ‘if the relationship has been cut off between the two of you, observe the condition of fulfilling [the waiting period] for the sake of what occurred in the past in the relationship. Do not put others quickly in place of [the spouse].<sup>454</sup> Be patient until the allotted period has passed.’ Don’t you see that the bride whose marriage was not consummated is not commanded to undergo a waiting period, since there were no spousal relations between the two of them?

[2:228 cont’d] *And it is not lawful for them to hide what God has created in their wombs if they believe in God and the Last Day.*

It means that even if the tie between the two of you has been severed, do not sever what God has established in the parental relationship.

[2:228 cont’d] *Their mates have a better right to restore them*

It means that the one who had the prior relationship has a better right to restore the breach in the marriage.

[2:228 cont’d] *in such time if they desire to set things right;*

It means that the [husband’s] intention to return should be to set things right in the estrangement that occurred, not to prolong the waiting period for her if he has resolved to divorce her after he has taken her back.

[2:228 cont’d] *women shall have rights similar to those due from them, with justice;*

It means if he has a right over her for what he has expended in wealth, she has a right for prior service in the situation.

[2:228 cont’d] *but their men have a degree above them; God is Mighty, Wise.*

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<sup>454</sup> Although the three month waiting period is commanded for women alone, al-Qushayrī uses the masculine plural in this and the following sentence, and the masculine singular in the last sentence.

[He has the degree] in merit (*faḍīla*), but she has a prerogative (*mazīya*) in frailty and human weakness.

[2:229] *Divorce is twice;*

He calls for the separating of the divorce formula, so that you will not rush to complete the separation. Regarding its meaning it is said;

*If I discover that*

*you have resolved on slaying me*

*then leave me.*

*Little by little, I am becoming weaker.*<sup>455</sup>

[2:229 cont'd] *then honourable retention; or setting free kindly.*

Either a gracious relationship or a gracious separation. Bad marital life and the loss of pleasantries through blameworthy character traits are not acceptable on the path (*ṭarīqa*) nor is it praiseworthy in the law (*sharī'a*).

[2:229 cont'd] *It is not lawful for you to take of what you have given them*

For surely the report is, 'Anyone who asks for his gift back is like someone asking for his own vomit'.<sup>456</sup> Returning what you have ruined is contemptible.

[2:229 cont'd] *unless the couple fear that they may not maintain God's bounds. If you fear they may not maintain God's bounds, neither of them would be at fault if she were to ransom herself.*

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<sup>455</sup> The poem is addressed to a woman. Muṣṭafā states he was unable to trace this verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 92).

<sup>456</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives a large number of sources for this *ḥadīth*, including al-Bukhārī, 3:215, Abū Dāwud 3538, al-Nasā'ī, 6:266 and 6:267, and Ibn Mājah 2385.

It means that if the woman wants to free herself from her husband, she is not at fault in what she gives up in wealth, for truly the self is worth everything to its owner.<sup>457</sup> If the man, when he loses the companionship of the woman, could receive something from her, then at least he would receive some wealth for the loss of comfort in the situation.

[2:229 cont'd] *Those are God's bounds; do not transgress them. Whoever transgresses God's bounds — those are the evildoers.*

These are the good manners (*ādāb*) which God has taught you and made as a way (*sunna*) for you, so be mindful of his bounds (*ḥudūd*) and persist in recognizing His rights (*ḥuqūq*).

[2:230] *If he divorces her, she shall not be lawful to him after that, until she marries another husband. If he divorces her, then neither of them would be at fault to return to each other,*

A man finds it unbearable that his wife should marry another, so [God] prevents him from choosing separation with the intention of keeping her from remarrying. He explains that she will not be lawful for him once he has separated from her until she does what he would find unbearable, and that is a second marriage. So he will be cautious, as much as he is able, in [initiating] divorce. Then He said: *If he divorces her*, meaning the spouse, *then neither of them would be at fault to return to each other*, meaning her remarrying the first husband.

The allusion in it is that love's capture of the heart makes the endurance of every misery easy, for if after separating, the spouses feel regret for their lost union, and then the greatest remorse, there is no fault in their returning to each other. The woman in this circumstance is as if she is protected<sup>458</sup> from the first husband by the place of the second husband while the husband is like one who has brought this on himself in permitting that.

[2:230 cont'd] *if they think that they will maintain God's bounds. Those are God's bounds, which He makes clear to a people who have knowledge.*

It means that when they know their need for each other as companions, they will not separate a second time. The one who spoke for them said:

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<sup>457</sup> Al-Qushayrī seems to be saying here that a woman's freedom might be worth more to her than the return of her dowry.

<sup>458</sup> Basyūnī has a blank in his text here, saying the manuscript he was working from was written as *al-mayshūr*, which also looks to be the word in Y101, f.34a. Basyūnī suggests the correct word might be *mabtūr*. The translation here follows the text in MS K117, f. 26b, which could be read as *mastūr*.

*I swore that if I met you  
one more time,  
I would never again separate from you  
a second time.*<sup>459</sup>

**[2:231] *When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, then retain them honorably, or set them free honorably; do not retain them in harm to transgress; whoever does that has wronged his soul; take not God's verses in mockery, and remember God's grace upon you, and the Book, and the wisdom He has revealed to you, to exhort you therewith; and fear God, and know that God has knowledge of all things.***

The verse contains the command to goodly marital relations, which is abandoning anger and stubborn bickering with the wife. So either release [her] without being rough or practice true companionship as it should be carried out.

**[2:232] *When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, do not debar them from marrying their husbands when they have agreed together honorably. That is an admonition for whoever of you believe in God and the Last Day; that is purer for you, and cleaner. God knows, and you know not.***

The verse contains a prohibition for guardians against hurting [the women under their protection], renouncing the violent anger of the time of ignorance (*jahliyya*) and yielding to the decree of God in giving women in marriage if they wish it, without indignation or rage.<sup>460</sup> Rather, 'since you were sufficiently pleased to betroth her to a mate, it is prohibited to [then] oppress her'. The dissolving of human attributes by the subjugation of the lower self is a more intense struggle and a more sincere transaction for the sake of God.

**[2:233] *Mothers suckle their children for two full years for such as desire to fulfill the suckling.***

The consummate metaphor for mercy is the mercy of mothers. God (s) commanded mothers to be fully merciful in suckling their children for two complete years. Cutting off the suckling

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<sup>459</sup> This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>460</sup> This verse is said to have been revealed concerning a man who angrily refused to allow his sister to remarry the man who had divorced her. The incident is mentioned in many Qur'ān commentaries, including *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (translation by Feras Hamza, <http://al-tafsir.com>).

before two years is an allusion to the fact that the mercy of God towards his servant is more perfect than the mercy of mothers.

[2:233 cont'd] *It is for the father to provide them and clothe them honorably.*

It means the father must provide for nursing women and clothe them honorably. When they are performing an act for you, their right is your obligation. Surely the one who is entirely yours is entirely your responsibility.

[2:233 cont'd] *No soul is charged save to its capacity;*

The holding back of one who has ability is miserliness – to stop in a moment of weakness is an excuse.

[2:233 cont'd] *a mother a shall not be harmed by her child*

in the suckling and what is necessary for it.

[2:233 cont'd] *neither a father by his child. The heir has a similar duty.*

It means the father by his child, meaning what is obligatory to him in support and tenderness. Just as the right of the child is incumbent on the parents, the right of the parents is incumbent on the child.

[2:233 cont'd] *But if the two desire by mutual consent and consultation to wean, then they would not be at fault. And if you desire to seek nursing for your children, you would not be at fault, provided you hand over what you have given honorably, and fear God, and know that God sees what you do.*

It means the weaning before two years – after the right intention, there is no fault. The verse includes [that which] smoothes the path of companionship, teaching the best morals in the precepts of marital life. Surely those who are not merciful will not themselves be treated with mercy (*wa-inna man lā yarḥam lā yurḥam*). The Prophet (ﷺ) said to someone who mentioned



that his children didn't kiss him, 'Surely God does not take away mercy except for the one with a miserable heart'.<sup>461</sup>

**[2:234] *And those of you who pass away, leaving wives, they shall wait by themselves for four months and ten. When they have reached their term, then you would not be at fault regarding what they may do with themselves, honorably; God is aware of what you do.***

Because the right of the dead is more important since his separation is not by choice, the period [for the widow] to complete used to be longer. In the beginning of Islam, the waiting period after death was one year. However it reverted to four months and ten days to verify that no sperm of the husband is present in the womb. When the waiting period comes to an end, she is permitted to marry another husband. No one's fidelity lasts to the end of life, as it is said:

*Just as faces*

*decay in the ground*

*so does the grief*

*of [women].*<sup>462</sup>

**[2:235] *You would not be at fault regarding the proposal you present or hide in your hearts to women. God knows that you will be mindful of them; but do not make arrangements with them secretly, unless you speak honorable words.***

What this permits includes seeking affection and laying the groundwork for the state of union. What it forbids is doing prohibited sinful acts or preparing for such an act.

**[2:235 cont'd] *And do not resolve on the knot of marriage until that which is written has reached its term; and know that God knows what is in your souls; so be fearful of Him; and know that God is Forgiving, Forbearing.***

i.e., the waiting period of the first [marriage] is required so that respect for the deceased is not neglected.

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<sup>461</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān gives *Abū Dāwud*, *Adab* 58, *al-Tirmidhī*, *Birr* 16, and *Ibn Ḥanbal* 2:301, 442, 461 as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>462</sup> *Muṣṭafā* states that the verse is attributed to *Abū al-ʿAtāhiya* (*Muṣṭafā* no. 12, p. 113).

[2:236] *You would not be at fault if you divorce women while you have not touched them, nor appointed any obligation for them; yet make provision of comforts for them honorably, the one of ample means, according to his means, and the needy man, according to his means — an obligation on the virtuous.*

If you have initiated<sup>463</sup> the union with your mates, but then change your mind [before the consummation], there is no fault for you in choosing separation if you wish, for there is only One Whom it is not permissible to choose to separate from. The companionship of human beings with one another is not obligatory but rather is at most prescribed as permissible. But<sup>464</sup> because your name and reputation is now part of theirs, half of the determined amount [of the dowry] must belong to them, for the separation, however it came about, is difficult. So He has appointed what is necessary in compensation to remain with her upon being made to drink the cup of separation. If there was no determined amount, the contract still requires the gift (*muta*), for her being made to drink the cup of separation without [some compensatory] comfort is a terrible trial.

[2:237] *And if you divorce them before you have touched them, and you have already appointed for them an obligation, then one-half of what you have appointed, unless it be that they make remission, or he makes remission, the one in whose hand is the knot of marriage; yet that you should remit is nearer to piety.*

Then He mentioned that remission is more perfect and more commendable, either on the part of the woman in the half due to her or from the husband in the half returning to him.

[2:237 cont'd] *Forget not kindness between you; surely God sees what you do.*

It is said that whoever is remiss<sup>465</sup> in kindness and is content with the obligatory will soon neglect the obligatory [as well].

It is said that forgetting kindness brings one closer to stinginess. Part of the way of the noble (*sunnat al-kirām*) is that when there are no obvious occasions for acting with nobility, they sharpen the eyes of generosity to look for its more subtle kindnesses, and their calls for these are amply fulfilled.

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<sup>463</sup> The translation follows the phrase ‘to initiate union’ (*ibtada`a bi`l-waṣl*) found in MSS K117, f. 27a and Y101, f. 34b rather than the phrase *ibtalā`<sup>am</sup> tamma bi`l-waṣīla* ) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>464</sup> The word ‘but’ (*lākin*) is added on the basis of MSS K117, f. 27a and Y101, f. 34b.

<sup>465</sup> The translation follows the phrase *akhalla bi`l-faḍl* in MSS K117, f. 27b and Y101, f. 34b rather than the phrase *akhadha bi`l-faḍl* in the Basyūnī edition.

[2:238] *Maintain (ḥāfīzū) the prayers and the middle prayer, and stand submissive to God.*

To maintain (*muḥāfaẓa*) the prayers is to come to them with awe and to leave with reverence, and to ask to be in a state of continual presence with good manners. The middle prayer is mentioned without clearly defining it so that you will observe each of them thinking it is the one and will not neglect any.

[2:239] *And if you are in fear, then standing, or mounted. But when you are secure, then remember God, as He taught you what you knew not.*

i.e., ‘Do not abandon intimate conversations with Me because of their [designated] times. I have enabled you [to do them in another way]. For truly I am the One Who gives power to the enemies you fear over you. But when you withdraw in your hearts through Me, their hands will be unable to reach you. I have appointed victory for you over them. Then when the fear is gone from you and **you are secure**, return to what you have established [in prayers], exerting your utmost in the times of your devotion in My presence, in private or in public’.

[2:240] *And those of you who die, leaving wives, make testament for their wives, provision for a year; but if they go forth, you would not be at fault regarding what they may do with themselves honorably; God is Mighty, Wise.*

The waiting period after the death of the husband in the beginning of Islam was an uninterrupted year, according to the words and actions of the Arabs [before Islam]. With respect to that, the one who spoke for them said:

*Until the end of the year*

*then ‘peace be upon both of you’.*

*Whoever weeps for an entire year*

*has absolved themselves of any guilt.*<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Muṣṭafā traces this verse to Labīd b. Rabī‘ (d.40/660-1) as recorded in several texts (Muṣṭafā no. 18, p. 62). The translation follows the version of the poem given by Muṣṭafā which corresponds to MSS K117, f. 27b and Y101, f. 35a.

Then this was abrogated to four months and ten days since the mourning period inevitably ends. The one who spoke for them said:

*He said, 'If you die,*

*I cannot live'.*

*I said, 'You are being hypocritical*

*so be silent.*

*What living thing*

*do you see,*

*that dies from love*

*for something which is dead?*<sup>467</sup>

**[2:241] *There shall be provision for divorced women, honorably — an obligation on those who fear.***

The allusion is that you should not combine for them the separation with deprivation, thereby doubling the difficulty for them.

**[2:242] *So, God makes clear His signs for you, so that you might understand.***

‘[These are] guideposts (*dalā'il*), so learn refined behavior through what is shown to you and you will prosper by that which you understand from the tokens of My wisdom’.

**[2:243] *Have you not seen those thousands, who went forth from their habitations fearful of death? God said to them, 'Die!' Then He gave them life. Truly God is bounteous to people, but most people are not thankful.***

When they viewed it farfetched that they would return by God's power, He showed them this directly in their own selves.<sup>468</sup> The manifestation of that, however, did not benefit those who

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<sup>467</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he could not find this verse in another source (Muṣṭafā no. 2, p. 37).

had not sharpened their insight regarding divine unity (*tawhīd*). Anyone whose insight has been strengthened will not be harmed by a lack of these direct forms of evidence, for they have already confirmed what they have been told through their faith in the Unseen.

[2:244] *So fight in God's way, and know that God is Hearing, Knowing.*

It means, 'if pain touches you and a cry rises up from you, know that God hears your cry, knows your states, and sees your affairs', so the verse brings about an easing of the pain they endure. They said:

*While most people want  
ease and comfort,  
I wish to complain to you  
for then you will hear.*<sup>469</sup>

[2:245] *Who is he that will lend God a loan that is good, and He will multiply it for him manifold?*

The loan is called *qarḍ* because one 'cuts off' (*yaqṭa 'u*)<sup>470</sup> something from one's wealth in order to give it to a borrower. When the almsgiver 'cuts' alms (*ṣadaqa*) from his wealth, his gift is called *qarḍ* because it is the bit cut off. But what is designated by the term *qarḍ* and its articulation is in keeping with the hearts of the lovers inasmuch as He speaks directly to you on the subject of almsgiving through it.<sup>471</sup>

It is said the verse suggests the importance of the wealthy since He questioned them about the loan, but the rank of the poor is even more important in this because He asked about the loan on their behalf. He might ask for the loan from anyone but he did not ask it for the sake of just

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<sup>468</sup> There are a number of different stories told in the *tafsīr* literature to explain this Qur'ānic verse. Al-Qushayrī is referring to the motif in most of these in which a large group of people die and then are brought back to life. For more details on these stories, see Mahmoud M. Ayoub's *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1, pp. 232-236.

<sup>469</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the first part of the verse to Majnūn in his *Diwān* and quotes the entire verse there as *While most men want ease and comfort, I want to meet you at night alone*. He traces the second part of the verse to al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf in his *Diwān* and quotes the entire line as *Men want what they love. I only want to complain to you and then you will hear* (Muṣṭafā no. 4, p. 77).

<sup>470</sup> *Qaraḍa* and *qaṭa 'a* are synonyms.

<sup>471</sup> The meaning of this sentence is a bit obscure. Perhaps al-Qushayrī is drawing attention, as he does elsewhere, to the form of address in this Qur'ānic verse: God asks a question directly of human beings here, rather than telling the Prophet what to say or ask.

anyone. In the tradition: The Messenger of God (ﷺ) died while his coat of mail was pawned with Abū Shaḥma the Jew for barley, which he had taken to feed his family.<sup>472</sup> Look from whom he borrowed and for the sake of whom he borrowed!

It is said the good loan is one for which you do not look for a reward and do not seek recompense.

It is said the good loan is not given in a heedless way, but rather from witnessing [what is needed].

It is said the good loan, according to religious scholars, is given only when one has the means. According to the most respected (*al-akābir*), it is the condition of preferring others [to one's self] in giving without any hesitation.

It is said the good loan according to the religious scholars is 2.5%.<sup>473</sup> According to the folk, it is giving all generously, including one's spirit.

[2:245 cont'd] *God straitens (yaqbiḍ) and enlarges (yabsuṭ); and to Him you shall be returned.*

He takes hold (*yaqbiḍ*)<sup>474</sup> of the alms from the rich with the grasp (*qabḍ*) of His acceptance, and opens (*yabsuṭ*) for them the largesse (*baṣṭ*) of His recompense.

It is said He straitens (*yaqbiḍ*) the provision, i.e., 'He restricts' (*yuḍayyiqu*); and enlarges the provision, i.e., 'He expands' (*yuwassī'u*). He straitens the poor in order to test them in patience and enlarges the rich so as to lay claim to their gratitude.

It is said He takes the consoling of the poor in His grasp so that they will not look to any others,<sup>475</sup> and then opens it so that they will not have to become accustomed to the favor of the rich.

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<sup>472</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Bukhārī, *Jihād* 89, *Maghāzī* 86, al-Tirmidhī, *Buyū'* 58 and 83, and Ibn Mājah, *Ruhūn* 1, among other sources for this ḥadīth.

<sup>473</sup> The obligatory alms (*zakāt*) amount.

<sup>474</sup> The verb and noun forms from the roots *qabaḍa* and *baṣaṭa* have nuances in meaning that are reflected in the different English words used for the translation of the commentary for this Qur'ānic verse.

It is said He said to the rich, ‘When I have straitened the provision for the poor, do not abandon them, and when I enlarge it for you, do not view that as due to your own merit’.

It is said He has constricted (*qabaḍa*) hearts by His turning away and has expanded (*basāṭa*) them by His drawing near.

It is said the constriction (*qabḍ*) is because of the fear that comes over hearts and the expansion (*baṣṭ*) is because of the hope that comes over them.

It is said the constriction is because of His vanquishing (*qahr*) and the expansion is because of His beneficence (*birr*).

It is said the constriction is because of His secret (*sirr*) and the expansion is because of His unveiling (*kashf*).

It is said the constriction is for those who seek (*murīdūn*) and the expansion is for those who are sought (*murādūn*).<sup>476</sup>

It is said the constriction is for those who vie with one another [in good works]<sup>477</sup> and the expansion is for those with mystical knowledge (*‘ārifūn*).

It is said He seizes you (*yaqbiḍ*) from yourself and then expands (*yabsuṭ*) you through Himself.

It is said the constriction is His right (*ḥaqq*) and the expansion is your fortune (*ḥazz*)

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<sup>475</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘others’ (*aghyār*) from MSS K117, f. 28a and Y101, f. 35b rather than the word ‘the rich’ (*aghnā*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>476</sup> For a discussion of the difference between those who seek and those who are sought, see the ‘Section on Spiritual Desire (*bāb al-irāda*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 433-439, especially the last two pages).

<sup>477</sup> The translation follows Basyūnī’s suggestion that the word *mutasābiqūn* echoes the word *sābiqūn* as found in Qur’ānic verses 23:61, 57:21, and others. MSS K117, f. 28a and Y101, f. 35b have two different words here, neither of which is clear in meaning.

It is said the constriction is for one who assumes guardianship (*tawallā*)<sup>478</sup> from the Real and expansion is for the one to whom the Real self-discloses (*tajallā*).

It is said He constricts (*yaqbiḍ*) when He calls you to witness your actions and He expands (*yabsuṭ*) when He calls you to witness His grace.

It is said He constricts by the mention of chastisement (‘*adhāb*’) and expands by the mention of affirmation (*ijāb*).

**[2:246] *Have you not seen the council of the Children of Israel after Moses, when they said to a prophet of theirs, ‘Send for us a king, and we will fight in God’s way’. He said, ‘Might it be that if fighting is prescribed for you, you will not fight?’***

They took on the matter by their own choice (*ikhtiyār*) and demanded that their prophet ask permission for them to fight. When they were granted what they were themselves answerable to, they turned to laziness (*takāsul*), and veered off course into their familiar territories of desertion (*takhādhul*)<sup>479</sup> and knowing neglect (*taghāful*). It is said they did show strength and rigor in fighting to defend their possessions and their dwellings since:

**[2:246 cont’d] *They said, ‘Why should we not fight in God’s way, when we have been expelled from our habitations and our children?’ Yet when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned their backs, except a few of them; and God has knowledge of the evildoers.***

But because of [their motive] they did not achieve their objective because their resolve was not purely for the right of God. If they had said, ‘Why should we not fight in the way of God for He has commanded us, and made [this] an obligation to us? He is our Chief and Protector, and His command is binding on us’, then perhaps they would have fully achieved what they had set out to do.

**[2:247] *Then their prophet said to them, ‘Verily God has raised up Saul for you as king’. They said, ‘How can he be king over us when we have better right than he to kingship,***

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<sup>478</sup> The word *tawallā* means to assume responsibility for others. According to al-Qushayrī, it is used in an active and passive way to describe the relationship of human beings and the divine. Friendship (*wilāya*) with God means that God is one’s guardian (*walī*) but also that one guards the right of God. God protects the friend and the friend protects the right of God. See the ‘Section on Friendship (*bāb al-wilāya*)’ in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, pp. 519-525, especially the first two pages).

<sup>479</sup> The translation follows the word *al-takhādhul* found in the MSS K117, f. 28a and Y101, f. 35a rather than the word ‘to quarrel’ (*al-tajādul*) in the Basyūnī edition.



*seeing he has not been given amplitude of wealth?’ He said, ‘God has chosen him over you and has increased him broadly in knowledge and body (jism). God gives the kingship to whom He will; and God is Embracing, Knowing.*

They forgot [God’s] right of free choosing (*ikhtiyār*), viewing the situation instead with the eye of the external world. They deemed it unlikely that Saul could be a king because he was poor and without property. [God] explained to them that merit is by the choice of the Real and that if he lacked wealth, ‘God has increased him in knowledge and has favored him over you by his knowledge and body (*jism*)’. It is said He meant that he was praiseworthy in the qualities of the self (*nafs*), not large in [his] physical frame (*binya*), for as it is said in the adage, ‘So and so is a name without a body (*fulān ism bi-lā jism*)’, i.e. a man without substance.<sup>480</sup>

*[2:248] And their prophet said to them, ‘The sign of his kingship is that there will come to you the Ark. Therein is a Spirit of Peace from your Lord, and a remnant of what the folk of Moses and the folk of Aaron left behind, the angels bearing it. Surely in that shall be a sign for you if you are believers’.*

Verily when God (s) makes a light appear, He increases it with help from Himself. When Saul was made king over them, the doubt about his qualification was eliminated by the appearance of [God’s] signs proving the veracity of the words of their prophet<sup>481</sup> in choosing him. He returned the Ark which contained the Spirit of Peace (*sakīna*) to them. Thus the sign of his kingship became clear to them and the fact that their prophet (‘a) had spoken truly to them in what he told them.

It is said that God Most High placed the Spirit of Peace (*sakīna*) of the Children of Israel in the Ark which contained the shards<sup>482</sup> of the tablets and the rod of Moses (‘a), and [other] relics of their possessors of prophecy. He placed the Spirit of Peace of [Muḥammad’s] community in their hearts: *He it is Who sent down the spirit of Peace into the hearts of the believers* [48:4]. Then verily the Ark circulated in the hands of enemies and others. One time it was buried, another time it was seized and carried away, another time it was returned, and another time [and so on...]. As for the hearts of the believers, He comes between their possessors and [the Spirit of Peace]. He did not entrust it to a king or a prophet, or to the heavens or air, or to a place or person. The Prophet (s) said, ‘*The heart of the believer is between the two fingers of the Merciful*’,<sup>483</sup> meaning in the grasp of the Real (s) and under His mastery (*taglīb*) and disposition (*taṣrīf*). What is meant by it is the divine power of

<sup>480</sup> Al-Qushayrī is suggesting that the use of the word *jism* in this Qur’ānic verse indicates moral rather than bodily stature.

<sup>481</sup> The *tafsīr* literature gives several names for the possible identity of the prophet mentioned here, including Samuel, Simon and Joshua (Ayoub, citing al-Ṭabarī in *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1, p. 237).

<sup>482</sup> The translation follows the phrase *fihī raṣrāṣ al-alwāḥ* found in MSS K117, f. 28a and Y101, f. 35b rather than the phrase *raḍū ‘an al-alwāḥ* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>483</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives Ibn ‘Adī’s *al-Kāmil fī al-Ḍu‘āfā’*, 7:2557, al-Bahaqī’s *al-Asmā’ wa’l-ṣifāt*, 341, and al-Ṭabarī’s *Tafsīr* among other sources for this *ḥadīth*. Slightly different versions can be found in Muslim, Tirmidhī, Ibn Majā, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

deliberate action (*qudra*). What a difference between a community whose Spirit of Peace is in what enemies can control and a community whose Spirit of Peace is in that over which no created being has any control!

[2:249] *And when Saul went forth with the hosts, he said, ‘God will try you with a river; whoever drinks of it, is not of me, and whoever tastes it not, he is of me, except for him who scoops up with his hand.*

The allusion in this verse is that God (*s*) tests human beings in their association with others, with this world, and with the lower self. There are some whose association with these things is limited to that which is required for basic livelihood and what is necessary for their salvation and security. There are others who go beyond the limit of what is required, extending their association with things of the world, self and creation for the sake of carnal desire<sup>484</sup> and preference. There is nothing from God in something which involves doing a prohibited thing. There is nothing from this path (*tarīqa*) that is not by His hand.<sup>485</sup>

[2:249 cont’d] *But they drank of it, except a few of them;*

Likewise the elect in every moment are few in their number but sublime in their worth.

[2:249 cont’d] *and when he crossed it, with those who believed, they said, ‘We have no power today against Goliath and his troops’.*

They viewed the situation with the eye of the external world and were overcome with mortal fright. God fortified their hearts, telling them of the help of the Real (*s*) to His friends if He will.

[2:249 cont’d] *Those who thought they would meet God, said, ‘How often a little company has overcome a numerous one, by God’s leave; and God is with the patient’.*

Not by them, but by the permission of God through what He has willed, and His aid and His help. God is with the patient through help, support and strength.

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<sup>484</sup> The translation follows the word ‘carnal desire’ (*shahwa*) from MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f. 36a rather than the word ‘witness’ (*shahāda*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>485</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f. 36a in the last part of this sentence.

[2:250] *So, when they went forth against Goliath and his troops, they said, ‘Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and grant us victory over the disbelieving folk!’*

*So, when they went forth against Goliath and his troops*, they exonerated themselves of all power and strength and turned to God, seeking His succor, asking for His aid, and trusting in His help. *They said, ‘Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet:* they sought firmness and patience at first for the sake of the sufferings they had previously endured, but then they said, *‘and grant us victory over the disbelieving folk!’*<sup>486</sup> The most important of their concerns was patience and standing up to the enemy, and only after that help for themselves. Patience is the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) while help is their portion. They stepped forward to assert His right (*s*) and to succeed for His sake,<sup>487</sup> and then to find what was theirs for their worldly concerns and portion from [His] help.<sup>488</sup> Moreover they indicated that they were seeking help against them, not out of revenge for what had been taken from them, but because they were disbelievers, the enemies of God. They stood in every way for God through God. Because of that they were helped and found victory.

[2:251] *And they routed them, by the leave of God, and David slew Goliath; and God gave him the kingship and Wisdom, and He taught him such as He willed.*

God frightened the enemies with Saul since He has given him such a large body, but at the time of the fighting He made the victory at the hands of David. As the story goes, he was of middling stature, not large in body, a compact person. He had no weapon with him but a slingshot, but the victory was his because the help of God (*s*) was with him.

*And they routed them, by the leave of God* so that nothing, not even a trace remained of them. David killed Goliath. Because of Goliath’s bulk and size, David’s victory over him was unimaginable, but as the one who spoke for them said:

*He met me*

*with his sword drawn*

*and said to me,*

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<sup>486</sup> These four sentences appear in MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f.36a, but not in the Basyūnī printed edition.

<sup>487</sup> The translation follows the phrase ‘for His sake’ (*lahu*) found in MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f. 36a rather than the phrase ‘for their sake’ (*lahum*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>488</sup> The word ‘portion’ (*naṣīb*) has been added on the basis of MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f. 36a.

'One of us is gone'.<sup>489</sup>

[2:251 cont'd] *Had God not repelled people some by means of others, the earth would have surely been corrupted; but God is bounteous to all worlds.*

If mankind were to make common cause and agree with one another altogether, the weak would be destroyed by the victory of the strong. But He makes some engage with others so that by their engagement He repels a people's evil.

[2:252] *These are the verses of God We recite to you in truth, and assuredly you are one of the Messengers [of God].*

Acquaintance with these long ago beings from the past was not a part of your knowledge or within your capacity to deceive [Muḥammad]. Rather, you become acquainted with them through the information given by God (s).

[2:253] *Those messengers some We have preferred above others; some there are to whom God spoke, and some He raised in rank. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit.*

In the message they were united but they differed in the specific details. Each one of them has lights and their lights have places where they are cast. Among them is one who is the most sublime in terms of light and most perfect in rank and intensity. Their virtues are not entitlements based on their actions and states, but rather are a goodly decree that came to them (*ḥukm bi'l-ḥusnā adrakahum*) and a beautiful succession that reached them in turns (*wa-āqibat bi'l-jamīl tadāarakathum*).

[2:253 cont'd] *And had God willed, those who came after them would not have fought against one another after the clear proofs had come to them; but they fell into variance, and some of them believed, and some disbelieved, and had God willed they would not have fought against one another, but God does whatever He desires.*

Yet they are made to turn about by the eternal will and have been stripped of the choice around which everything circles (*madār*) and by which is the estimation (*i'tibār*).

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<sup>489</sup> Basyūnī has the word *ma'dhūl* but says maybe it is *makhdhūl*. The word in MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f.36a is clearly *ma'zūl*. The verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

Servanthood is the tightening of the belt of service (*khidma*) and the witnessing of prior fate (*qisma*).

[2:254] *O you who believe, expend of what We have provided you with before there comes a day in which there shall be neither commerce, nor friendship, nor intercession. And the disbelievers — they are the evildoers.*

It means take advantage of the help in being granted the ability to act virtuously before strength flags and life<sup>490</sup> passes.

[2:255] *God, there is no god, except Him, the Living, the Eternal Sustainer.*

*Allāh* is a name (*ism*) which only the Real (*s*) possesses. There is no namesake (*samī*) for Him with it. God Most High said, ‘Do you know [of] anyone who could be His namesake?’ [19:65], i.e., ‘Do you know anyone other than Him that could be called *Allāh*?’ Anyone who regards this as a derived term is like someone lost in oppositional tendencies. This is a term which denotes worthiness of the attributes of Majesty, not some derivation from [other] words. There are no parallels for what has no parallel in words.

His words, ‘*there is no god, except Him*’ is a statement that negates anything equivalent or similar to that which He has a title to in sanctity (*taqdīs*) and incomparability (*tanzīh*). Anyone who attests to this statement will not see so much as a speck to affirm in anything other than Him or from anything other than Him, so he will not bring up his need before any other, nor bear witness to a speck of anything other than Him. His concentration on Him is steady and his singular devotion to finding Him is perpetual. So he does not hear except from God and through God, and he does not witness anything except through God, and he does not approach anything but God, and he does not occupy himself with anything except through God. He is effaced from what is other than God and therefore he has no complaints or requests. Not a drop of blood moves in him for anything other than Him. When the Real gives to a servant in full measure, absolutely no possibility remains in him for worldly concerns. Surely then the truth of this statement [*there is no god, except Him*] must be acknowledged and all other ways of describing things must be obliterated. The truth to be realized is that there is no access for any creature to the existence of the Real (*s*), no union or parting, no nearness or distance, for truly those are all defects which are not worthy of the timeless eternal.

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<sup>490</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘time span’ (*amad*) from MSS K117, f. 28b and Y101, f. 36b rather than the word ‘hope’ (*amal*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

***The Living (ḥayy), the Eternal Sustainer (qayyūm):*** The One who takes charge of the affairs (*mutawallā*) of His servants, the One who is concerned Himself (*qā'im*) with every movement and stillness,<sup>491</sup> the One who sets in motion (*mujrī*)<sup>492</sup> every perceived thing (‘*ayn*) and effect (*athar*).

[2:255 cont'd] ***Slumber does not seize Him, neither sleep;***

because He is One who does not succumb to heedlessness (*ghafla*). He is self-sufficient and sought by all, untouched by any defect (‘*illa*). He is all-mighty, far from anything small (*qilla*). He is all-compelling, without being isolated (‘*uzla*). He is unique without a body (*juththa*). He is singular without aspect (*jiha*). He is eternal, untouched by any blight (*āfa*). He is tremendous without distance (*masāfa*).

His majesty is sanctified from His beauty and His majesty is His beauty. His brilliance is His splendor and His splendor is His brilliance. His eternity without beginning (*azal*) is His eternity without end (*abad*). His eternity without end is His eternity without beginning or end (*sarmad*). His eternity without beginning or end is His timeless eternity (*qidam*), and His timeless eternity is His existence (*wujūd*).

[2:255 cont'd] ***to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth;***

By way of property (*milk*), origination (*ibdā'*), creation (*khalq*) and invention (*ikhtirā'*).

[2:255 cont'd] ***who is there, that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?***

Who is there who shall take a breath without His bringing it about? Or shall seek access to Him without His leave and initiation? Whoever thinks that he can seek access to Him by any entitlement, action, obsequiousness, hope, nearness, relation, reason or cause – conjecturing is his homeland and ignorance his abode. Error is his destination and remoteness his end.

[2:255 cont'd] ***He knows what lies before them, and what is after them;***

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<sup>491</sup> The word ‘stillness’ (*sukūn*) is added on the basis of MSS K117, f. 29a and Y101, f. 36b.

<sup>492</sup> Basyūnī is unsure of the word in his edition, but the word in MSS K117, f. 29a and Y101, f. 36b is clearly *mujrī*.

Because nothing which can be known is left out of His knowledge and no existent or non-existent thing is obscure to Him.

[2:255 cont'd] *and they encompass nothing of His knowledge, save such as He wills.*

It means from the things that are known to Him. In other words, the different types of [human] knowledge fall short of encompassing what is known to Him, save by His permission. What hope is there in these for encompassing His Essence and Reality? How could it be possible to encompass it when there is no point where His might is cut off and no limit applies to Him?

[2:255 cont'd] *His throne subsumes the heavens and the earth;*

[This is] an address for each according to their capacity for comprehension. If not that, what importance could things that exist have in comparison with His attributes? His worth is too exalted in might for a throne or a chair. Embellishment [with things] is for a jinn or a human being.

[2:255 cont'd] *the preserving of them wearies Him not; He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.*

How could created things tire the One to whom the creation of the atom and the entire cosmos are the same? Nothing small is too easy for him and nothing large is too difficult.

[2:256] *There is no compulsion in religion.*

The arguments are clear and the proofs plain and evident.

[2:256 cont'd] *Rectitude has become clear from error;*

The night is distinguished by its darkness from the day and its light. The eternal rights are things to be known (*al-ḥuqūq al-azalīyya ma'lūma*) while the basic limits that define things are effects (*al-ḥudūd al-awwalīyya ma'lūla*). [The first] is through the predicate of timeless

eternity (*naʿt al-qidam*) and [the second] is through the attribute of non-existence (*wasf al-ʿadam*).<sup>493</sup>

[2:256 cont'd] *so whoever disbelieves in the false deity,*

The false deity is anything which distracts one from his Lord.

[2:256 cont'd] *and believes in God,*

Belief is the life of the heart through God.

[2:256 cont'd] *has laid hold of the most firm handle,*

Laying hold of the most firm handle is holding to the command and prohibition (*al-amr wa'l-nahy*), which is travelling the path of al-Muṣṭafā (ṣ).<sup>494</sup>

[2:256 cont'd] *unbreaking; God is Hearing, Knowing.*

Anyone who realizes the truth of it secretly and holds to it publicly will win in both abodes and will be happy in the two existences.

[2:257] *God is the Protector (walī) of the believers;*

The Protector (*walī*) in the sense of the One who takes charge of their affairs (*mutawallī*) and the One who is unique in settling their concerns. It is [also] correct to [understand] the word *walī* as being in the *faʿīl* pattern (in the sense of [the passive form] *maʿfūl*), so that [it is] the believers [who] assume responsibility (*yatawallawna*) for obeying Him. Both of them are correct. The first [way of understanding the word *walī*] is a gathering<sup>495</sup> and the second is a

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<sup>493</sup> In this passage al-Qushayrī seems to be making a distinction between the discernment of what the proper relationships between things are and the delimitation of things as ‘things’ that have no independent existence.

<sup>494</sup> Muḥammad is sometimes referred to as ‘the chosen one’ (*al-muṣṭafā*).

<sup>495</sup> Because God takes charge of the well-being of His servant.



separation.<sup>496</sup> Not every gathering will be tied to a separation and not every separation will be tied to a gathering. That is an error and that one who makes it is wrong. The verse bears both of the meanings.<sup>497</sup>

[2:257 cont'd] *He brings them forth from the shadows into the light.*

It means by His sempiternal decree, He protected them from the shadows which are errors and [blameworthy] innovation, for they were never in the shadows in His prior knowledge.

[2:257 cont'd] *And the disbelievers — their protectors are false deities*

that attract them with calls to disbelief.

[2:257 cont'd] *that bring them forth from the light into the shadows; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein they shall abide.*

Through the doubt which overwhelmed their hearts they denied the lordship. They are those who remain forever apart from the Real.

It is said *He brings them forth from the shadows* of their own managing (*tadbīr*) to the spaciousness of witnessing His determining of events (*taqdīr*).

It is said *He brings them forth from the shadows* of their thinking that they have any independent means or access to Him in anything they do or don't do.<sup>498</sup>

It is said *He brings them forth from the shadows* by lifting the shade of their lower selves from them and bringing them into the shade of His solicitude.

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<sup>496</sup> Because the servant himself must take charge of upholding God's rights.

<sup>497</sup> Al-Qushayrī is using a grammatical point about the adjective *walī* here to demonstrate his ideas about gathering (*jamʿ*) and separation (*farq*). When man experiences what is from himself, he is in a state of separation. When he experiences what is from God, he is in a state of union. See the section on 'Gathering and Separation' (*al-jamʿ wa'l-farq*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 207-8).

<sup>498</sup> Literally, their movements (*ḥarakāt*) and states of rest (*sakanāt*).

It is said He delivers them from the consideration of their salvation.

It is said He comes between them and their reliance on their actions and dependence on their states.

[2:258] *Have you not seen him who disputed with Abraham concerning his Lord, that God had given him the kingship? When Abraham said, 'My Lord is He who gives life, and makes to die', he said, 'I give life and make to die'. Abraham said: 'God brings the sun from the east; so bring it from the west.' Then the disbeliever was confused; and God guides not the folk who do evil.*

The Real (s) hastens the punishment of separation (*furqa*) for His enemies before He punishes them with burning (*hurqa*). This punishment is in actuality more powerful in its effect, if they had eyes to see. The Real (s) states that Abraham (‘a) moved with the accursed enemy from one sound proof to another which was clearer, not because there was anything wrong with the [first] proof, but because of the shortcomings in the understanding of the disbeliever. The touchstone of one whose sight is blocked from recognizing the truth is the wasting of time without any useful benefit. It is not about the quality of the proof for a matter about which there is no question.

[2:259] *Or such as he who passed by a city that was fallen down upon its turrets, he said, 'How shall God give life to this now that it is dead?'. So God made him die a hundred years, then he raised him up; He, said, 'How long have you tarried?'; he said, 'I have tarried a day, or part of a day'; He said, 'Nay; you have tarried a hundred years. Look at your food and drink, it has not spoiled; and look at your ass so that We would make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones, how We shall set them up, and then clothe them with flesh'. So, when it was made clear to him, he said, 'I know that God has power over all things'.*

This was not a question of denial, a matter of ignorance, or an indication of doubt in the [divine] power of deliberation, since this report is about Ezra (‘*Uzayr*’) the prophet (‘a) and it is not possible for the prophets (‘a) to doubt or be ignorant. Rather, it was a question of amazement. In this conversation [Ezra] wanted an increase in certainty, so God showed him that in himself by making him die and then bringing him to life, and then reviving his ass while he watched. He became more and more certain. Demanding certainty from God and the tactic of posing difficulties is the practice of oppositional people, but God excused<sup>499</sup> Ezra in this conversation and even ordained for him the increased certainty he sought. Then he said, ***'I know that God has power over all things'*** in giving life and causing death, i.e., ‘My

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<sup>499</sup> There is a blank in Basyūnī here, which has been completed with the word ‘excused’ (*adhara*) from MSS K117, f. 29b and Y101, f. 37b.

knowledge has been increased by what I saw.<sup>500</sup> He showed me that which increased my certainty from powerful signs'. His food and drink did not change in this long period. His ass died and his bones decayed,<sup>501</sup> whereas the food and drink would have been more likely to spoil.

[2:260] *And when Abraham said, 'My Lord show me how You give life to the dead'. He said, 'Why, do you not believe?' 'Yes', he said, 'but so that my heart may be re-assured'. Said He, 'Take four birds, and twist them to you, then set a part of them on every hill, then summon them, and they will come to you in haste. And know that God is Mighty, Wise'.*

It is said he was looking for increased certainty and wanted to compare the reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) with what he had already obtained in the essence of certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*).<sup>502</sup>

It is said what [Abraham] said here sought to elicit His words (s), ***'Why, do you not believe?'*** [Abraham] said, 'Yes, I believe but I longed to have You say to me, ***"Why, do you not believe?"*** and your saying this to me is a reassurance to my heart'. The lover is forever striving to find a way to address his beloved in any way he can.

It is said he was seeking a vision of the Real (s), but by hint or allusion, for he was kept from [the vision] by the allusion in His words, ***'And know that God is Mighty, Wise'***. When Moses (ʿa) asked for the vision directly, saying: *'My Lord! Show me that I may behold You!'* [7:143], [God] replied directly and clearly, and it was said to him, *'You shall not see Me'* [7:143].

It is said he only sought the life of his heart and it was shown to him that that was by the sacrifice of these birds. Among the four birds there was a peacock and the allusion in its sacrifice pertained to the ornament and beauty of the present world. There was also the crow because of his greed, and the rooster because of his [strutting] walk, and the duck because of his seeking provision.

<sup>500</sup> The phrase 'by what I saw' is added on the basis of MSS K117, f. 29b and Y101, f. 37b.

<sup>501</sup> The story is told in the *tafsīr* literature that Ezra saw the decayed bones of his ass before God caused it to come to life again. See *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* at <http://al-tafsir.com> (translation by Feras Hamza).

<sup>502</sup> In the section on 'Knowledge of Certainty, Essence of Certainty and the Reality of Certainty' (*ʿilm al-yaqīn wa-ʿl-ʿayn al-yaqīn wa-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī writes that 'Knowledge of certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*), according to their terminology, is conditional on demonstrative proof (*burhān*). The essence of certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) is conditional on clear evidence (*bayān*). The reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) is conditional on direct witnessing (*ʿiyān*). Knowledge of certainty belongs to the masters of intellects (*arbāb al-ʿuqūl*). The essence of certainty belongs to the masters of the religious sciences (*aṣḥāb al-ʿulūm*). The truth of certainty belongs to the masters of mystical knowledge (*aṣḥāb al-maʿārif*)'. (al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, vol.1, p. 244).

When Abraham (‘a) said, ‘*show me how You give life to the dead*’ it was said to him, ‘Will you show Me how you sacrifice life?’ meaning Ishmael, one demand for another. When [Abraham] fulfilled what had been asked of him, the Real fulfilled what he had requested.

It is said it was under a promise from the Real (s) that he took [Abraham] as a friend (*khalīl*), and the sign of that was reviving the dead at his hand, and what came to pass came to pass.

He made a connection between the story of al-Khalīl (s) in what He showed him and made manifest at his hand in reviving the dead, and Ezra when He showed him [what He showed him] in himself, because al-Khalīl was given preference over Ezra in what he asked and in his state. Abraham (‘a) did not talk back to [God] in any way but rather was polite in his request. Ezra spoke to Him with words resembling those of one who deems something farfetched. The Real wanted to reveal the most powerful miracle and most perfect proof to [Abraham] inasmuch as He made the reviving of the dead appear by his hand. When Abraham’s (‘a) words, ‘*My Lord is He who gives life and makes to die*’ [2:258] confounded Nimrod,<sup>503</sup> [Nimrod] said, ‘*I give to live and make to die*’ [2:258]. Abraham wanted God (s) to show him the revival of the dead so that he would know he should not make undue claims.

In these two verses there is permission for one who seeks increased certainty from God (swt) in the state of rational consideration (*naẓar*).

It is said Abraham wanted to bring life to the heart by the light of communion for the sake of perfection. It was said to him, ‘*Why, do you not believe?*’ which means, ‘Don’t you remember the state of your seeking Us when you were saying to everything you saw, “*This is my lord?*” [6:76-78]. You were not yet aware of how We would cause you to reach the utmost point [in understanding Our Lordship]. In this case as well, We will bring you to that to which you aspire’.

The allusion in this is that the life of the heart can only be by the sacrifice of these things,<sup>504</sup> meaning the lower self. The heart of one who does not sacrifice his lower self through struggles will not be given life by God.

There is also an allusion in His saying, ‘Cut these birds with your hands and separate their parts’. *Then summon them and they will come to you in haste*. What was sacrificed by the hand of the possessor of friendship, and cut and dismembered by his hand – every separate

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<sup>503</sup> The disbeliever mentioned in Qur’ānic verse 2:258 is most commonly identified as Nimrod in the *tafsīr* literature (Ayoub, *The Qur’an and Its Interpreters*, p. 257).

<sup>504</sup> i.e., the birds.

part answered him when he called it. Similarly, when the Real calls the one whom He has separated and scattered, he answers:

*Even if I was covered with dirt  
and You called me,  
the bones decayed,  
I would answer your voice.*<sup>505</sup>

**[2:261] *The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of God is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains; so God multiplies for whom He will; God is Embracing, Knowing.***

The recompense for [those who expend their wealth in the way of God] is the Garden. The recompense of those who expend their spirits in the way of God is the Real (s). What a difference between the recompense for one who expends his wealth and finds his reward and the one who expends his state and finds nearness! Expending wealth in His way is through alms (*ṣadaqa*) and expending states in His way is through constant sincerity (*ṣidq*)<sup>506</sup> and by negating every worldly concern or portion so that you are pleased with the flowing of His decree over you without any frowning of the heart. The one who spoke for them said:

*I want to be with him  
but he wants me to depart.  
So I leave want I want  
for what he wants.*<sup>507</sup>

There are two types of expending: the expending of worshippers (‘*ābidūn*) and the expending of ecstasies (*wājidūn*). When worshippers expend grain, it multiplies for them seventy times to what beyond reckoning. As for the ecstasies, it is as is said:

*There is nothing good we can bring*

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<sup>505</sup> This verse was not located in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>506</sup> The words *ṣadaqa* and *ṣidq* come from the same Arabic root.

<sup>507</sup> Muṣṭafā says the verse is attributed to Ibn al-Munajjim al-Wā‘iz ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Marwān (Muṣṭafā no. 18, p. 48).

*that they will accept,  
and if we do any harm,  
in their view there is no erasure.*<sup>508</sup>

**[2:262] *Those who expend their wealth in the way of God then do not follow up their expenditure with reminder of their generosity and injury, their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.***

The **reminder** is witnessing what you did. The **injury** is pointing out your beneficence to the one who receives it.

It is said they expend what they expend, but they most assuredly do not say anything about their actions or works.

It is said, ‘How can you give something and ask for your own right in return for it?’

It is said they do not remind others of what they have done for them, but rather bear witness to the favor of God in granting them success for that.

**[2:263] *Honorable words and forgiveness are better than a voluntary almsgiving followed by injury; and God is Independent, Forbearing.***

It means that words alone for the poor man, responding to his overture without showing censure, are better and more perfect than the alms of one who is proud of his act and what follows in causing one to suffer reproach.

It is said it is an acknowledgement from you with God of your weakness and sin. God’s forgiveness for you upon these words is better than alms adulterated with reproach and accompanied by injury.

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<sup>508</sup> The Arabic is the same in the Basyūnī printed edition, MSS K117, f. 30a and Y101, f. 38a. However Muṣṭafā changes ‘they’ to ‘you’ and gives a slightly different version attributed to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās: *There is nothing good we can bring that you will accept and if we do any harm, there is no forgiveness from you.* Muṣṭafā says this was said to Hārūn al-Rashīd when he was mad at ‘Abd al-Malik (Muṣṭafā no. 1, p. 121).

[2:264] *O you who believe, annul not your voluntary almsgivings with reproach and injury, as one who expends of his substance to show off to men and believes not in God and the Last Day. The likeness of him is as the likeness of a smooth rock on which is soil, and a torrent smites it, and leaves it barren. They have no power over anything that they have earned. God guides not the disbelieving folk.*

Rather the beauty of the gift comes from the Real (s). There is no gift from created beings that is attributable to anyone other than Him. Indeed, gifts that come from created beings are the greatest test (*miḥna*), while witnessing the gift from God is the greatest blessing (*ni'ma*). The one who spoke for them said:

*There is no humility*

*in your honoring important people.*

*On the contrary,*

*humility is that you honor the lowly.*<sup>509</sup>

It is said the poorest of creatures is the one who thinks himself fortunate, for his bankruptcy will become clear to him. Similarly the least of creatures in value is one who thinks that he has something, for what he did not reckon with will appear to him from God.

[2:265-266] *But the likeness of those who expend their wealth, seeking God's good pleasure, and to confirm themselves is as the likeness of a garden upon a hill; a torrent smites it and it yields its produce twofold; if no torrent smites it, then dew, and God sees what you do. \* Would any of you wish to have a garden of date-palms and vines, with rivers flowing beneath it, for him there is in it all manner of fruit, then old age smites him, and he has seed, but they are weak; then a whirlwind with fire smites it, and it is consumed. So, God makes clear the signs to you, so that you might reflect.*

These are numerous signs which God mentions by way of striking similitudes for the one who is sincere and the hypocrite, for the one who expends in the way of God and the one who expends his wealth in vain. These will obtain honor and recompense (*khalaf*) for themselves and those will receive only rejection in the present and nothing but ruin (*talaf*) in the end. The effort of these remains worthy of thanks (*mashkūr*), while those leave behind destruction (*thubūr*) and come to a blazing flame. The works of these thrive, their wealth grows, their states rising high before God, and their end will be communion. The works of those will come to nothing; their states will be of loss, their hopes sealed by misfortune, and their curse doubled for them.

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<sup>509</sup> This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

It is said the similitude of these is like one who planted seed, his property thrived, and his surplus grew. His branch became high and his benefit multiplied. The similitude of those is like one whose bargaining has failed, his commodity stolen, and his stratagem weakened in old age. His tribulations continued one after the other, in every way and in every time. How can these two be equal as an example? Do they have any resemblance to one another?

[2:267] *O you who believe, expend of the good things you have earned, and of what We have produced for you from the earth, and seek not the corrupt of it for your expending; for you would never take it yourselves without closing your eyes to it; and know that God is Independent, Laudable.*

Let everyone consider what he expends for the sake of himself and what he has produced by the command of his Lord. That which is taken against you is from your account book (*diwān*): What belongs to your worldly portion are the precious things you possess, and what belongs to your Lord are the things of little value<sup>510</sup> from your wealth. That which is [given by you] for God's sake is but a morsel, while that which is [given by God] for your sake is the most in value and the most perfect in blessing. Then see how He forgives you, and even accepts it from you. Nay, look how He compensates you. Nay, look how He praises you for it,<sup>511</sup> look how he ascribes it to you. Everything from Him is a favor but He ascribes it to you as an act. Therefore His gift is entrusted to you and the gift is called a reward. He enriches you by granting you success in kindness, and then the world swells with gratitude from you.

[2:268] *Satan promises you poverty and enjoins you to indecency, but God promises you His pardon, and His bounty; and God is Embracing, Knowing.*

Satan promises poverty because of his poverty. God promises forgiveness because of His generosity.

Satan promises you poverty and points you towards holding on to what is known. It is said he points you, in yielding to him, to greed and there is no poverty worse than that.

He promises you poverty by handing you over to your self-directing (*tadbīr*) and self-choosing (*ikhtiyār*).

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<sup>510</sup> The translation follows the word *khasā'is* found in MSS K117, f. 30b and Y101, f. 38b rather than the word *khaṣā'is* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>511</sup> The translation follows the phrase *kayfa yamdaḥuka bihi* found in MSS K117, f. 30b and Y101, f. 38b.



He promises you poverty in forgetting what you have become accustomed to from His bounty.

It is said He promises you poverty in that he does not let your complaints cease.<sup>512</sup>

It is said he promises you poverty in attaching your heart to what it doesn't need.

It is said [he promises you poverty] by deceiving you from seeing that He is sufficient.

*He enjoins you to indecency*, i.e. desire for the present world.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by the bonds that strengthen greed.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by multiplying expectations and forgetting contentment.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by following carnal desires and by preferring worldly fortunes.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by looking to something other than Him and in allowing anything to enter the mind except Him.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by going backwards to the familiar territories of permissiveness and interpretative license after the truth has become clear.

It is said [*He enjoins you to indecency*] by returning to what you had abandoned for God.

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<sup>512</sup> The translation follows the verb *lā yuzīlu* from MSS K117, f. 30b and Y101, f. 38b rather than *lā yaẓīdu* from the Basyūnī edition.

***But God promises you His pardon, and His bounty:*** The bounty promised in the here and now is contentment. In the future it is the reward, the Garden, the vision, the good pleasure, pardon<sup>513</sup> and forgiveness.

It is said it is victory in the here and now over the lower self.

It is said it is the opening of the door of mystical knowing, the spreading of the carpet of forgiveness, and receiving the unveilings of intimacy.

[2:269] ***He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good; yet none remembers, but the people of pith.***

**Wisdom** (*ḥikma*) is the thought (*khāṭir*) of the Real<sup>514</sup> ruling (*yaḥkum*)<sup>515</sup> you, not the caller of the lower self. The overpowering forces (*qawāhir*) of the Real rule you, not the drivers (*zawājir*)<sup>516</sup> of Satan.

It is said **wisdom** is rightness in affairs (*ṣawāb al-‘umūr*).

It is said [**wisdom**] is that the frivolities of human nature do not rule you. One who has no control (*ḥukm*) over his lower self has no control over anyone else.<sup>517</sup>

It is said **wisdom** is being in conformity (*muwāfaqa*) with the command of God Most High and foolishness is opposing (*mukhālaḥa*) His command.

It is said **wisdom** is bearing witness to the Real and foolishness is bearing witness to anything other than Him.

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<sup>513</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition, which has been completed with the word ‘pardon’ (‘*afw*’) from MSS K117, f. 30b and Y101, f. 38b.

<sup>514</sup> In his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī explains what is meant by the term *khāṭir* (pl. *khawāṭir*), which can be translated as ‘thought’, ‘feeling’, ‘inclination’ or ‘intuition’. *Khawāṭir* may come to one from the lower self, angels, Satan or God (al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, vol. 1, p. 242).

<sup>515</sup> The noun ‘wisdom’ (*ḥikma*) and the verb ‘to rule’ (*ḥakama*, *yaḥkum*) come from the same Arabic root *ḥ-k-m*, which means ‘to rule or have authority over something’ or ‘to judge’.

<sup>516</sup> See the footnote for the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:23-4 above for al-Qushayrī’s use of the words *zajr* and *zawājir*, and for a similar comparison of God’s subjugation of the heart versus its succumbing to the driving calls of other forces.

<sup>517</sup> Basyūnī suggests in a footnote that perhaps this line belongs after the reference to Satan, and is an error of the copyist. But MSS K117, f. 30b and Y101, f. 38b also have the line in this place.

**[2:270] *And whatever expenditure you expend, and whatever vow you make, surely God knows it. For the evildoers, they have no helpers.***

He has promised His punishment to some people, His reward to others, and His knowledge to others. [Those promised punishment or reward] are ordinary people and [those promised knowledge] are the elect. God Most High said, ‘*And submit patiently to the judgment of your Lord, for surely you fare before Our eyes*’ [52:48]. There is nothing that causes the falling of the servant from the eyes of God like opposing Him in the covenants with Him in the heart.<sup>518</sup> So let the aspirant be very wary of letting his soul err in that.

**[2:271] *If you proclaim your voluntary almsgivings, it is a fine thing; but if you conceal them, and give them to the poor, that is even better for you; and it will absolve you of your evil deeds. God is aware of what you do.***

“If you reveal your companionship with Us, making it public, you have behaved generously and well. But if you protect Our secret from the intrusion of intermediaries between us, you have kept the conditions of love and have raised up the lofty building of communion’.

**[2:272] *You are not responsible for guiding them; but God guides whomever He will. And whatever good you expend is for yourselves; for then you are expending, desiring only God’s Face, and whatever good you expend, shall be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.***

‘Yours is the praiseworthy station (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*), the firmly tied banner (*al-liwā’ al-ma’qūd*), the noble degrees (*al-rutab al-sharīfa*), the high waystations (*al-manāzil al-‘aliyya*), and the pleasing practices (*al-sunan al-marḍiyya*). You are the chief of those who come first and those who come last. No one comes close to you, let alone being equal to you. But you are not responsible for their guidance. Guidance is among the special characteristics of Our right and not sliver of it is given to another. O Muḥammad, you call them, but We guide them’.

**[2:273] *For the poor (fuqarā’), who are constrained in the way of God; and they are unable to journey in the land; the ignorant man supposes them rich because of their abstinence; but you shall know them by their mark; they do not beg of men importunately. And whatever good you expend, surely God has knowledge of it.***

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<sup>518</sup> For what al-Qushayrī might mean here by ‘covenants (‘*uhūd*) with God in the heart’, see his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:40 above.

The authority of reality (*sulṭān al-ḥaqīqa*) has obstructed every way for them; there is no way for them to travel to the east and no place to camp to the west. Whichever way they look, they see the large tents of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) surrounding them:

*It is as if the wide road of the earth,  
with all its vastness,  
became narrow for me,  
but it neither increased in length nor width.*<sup>519</sup>

They do not take a single breath with created beings.<sup>520</sup> Where would that come from when there are no created beings?<sup>521</sup> And if there are none, then to affirm what is not is an act of ascribing partnership in God's oneness.

The sincere poor man (*faqīr*)<sup>522</sup> stands with God through God. Outsiders cannot behold him and created beings have no way to him. [God] makes them appear in the eyes of others in clothes like theirs.<sup>523</sup> God Most High said, '*the ignorant man supposes them rich because of their abstinence*'. But for those who possess insight, there is no ambiguity in anything in their states. '*You shall know them, O Muḥammad, by their mark*'. This mark is not one that appears to the physical eye but a mark that insight perceives. There is no beholding them except by the light of oneness.

It is said *you will know them by their mark*, [which is] the rejoicing of their hearts at the breaking of their lower selves, and the crying out of their innermost selves to the throne as their outward form withers beyond recovery.

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<sup>519</sup> The translation follows the pronoun 'me' from MSS K117, f. 31a and Y101, f. 39a rather than the pronoun 'them' found in the Basyūnī edition. Muṣṭafā gives two slightly different versions of the verse from *Majnūn Laylā* and Abū'l-Shiṣ (Muṣṭafā no. 1, p. 75).

<sup>520</sup> In the section on 'Breath' (*nafas*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī describes 'masters of breath' who affirm God's unity (*tawḥīd*) in their innermost selves at every breath. If they do not, they experience a reckoning (vol. 1, p. 241). There is a brief mention of this spiritual elite in al-Qushayrī's commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:202 above.

<sup>521</sup> i.e., their recognition of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) is such that they do not see created beings but rather only God in everyone and everything.

<sup>522</sup> For more on how al-Qushayrī understands the relationship between poverty and friendship with God, see the 'Section on poverty (*bāb al-faqr*)' in his *Risāla*, which begins with this Qur'ānic verse (vol. 2, pp. 536-549).

<sup>523</sup> The translation follows MSS K117, f. 31a and Y101, f. 39a here.

It is said the brokenness of the outward form comes with the brokenness of the inward. On the contrary [with these poor], *they do not beg of men importunately*. If they do beg from created beings without being importune, as the [Qur'ānic] address suggests, that is a protection for them and for the secret of their story because creatures will not view them as begging. In their innermost selves, there is not a speck of affirmation for anything other [than God].<sup>524</sup>

It is said [regarding those] *who are constrained in the way of God* that they hold to the decree of God and constrain their lower selves in obedience to Him, their hearts in knowing Him, their spirits in loving Him, and the innermost selves in seeing Him.

[2:274] *Those who expend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

As long as they have wealth they do not become listless for even an hour in expending it night and day. When the wealth is depleted they do not become listless in bearing witness to Him at every moment, night and day.

[2:275] *Those who devour usury shall not rise again, except as one whom Satan has made prostrate from touch; that is because they say, 'Trade is like usury': God has permitted trade, and forbidden usury. Whoever receives an admonition from his Lord and desists, he shall have his past gains, and his affair is committed to God; but whoever reverts — those are the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein.*

Those who turn back from the affair and give themselves license for the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) that occurs to them have nothing for themselves in the present and no recovery in the end. They have lost now and will have no profit in the future. Those who heed the calls of admonition, curb the bridle of their whims, and do not give free rein to persistence [in prohibited actions] have been granted respite for the present. However, if they return to these blameworthy states, let them wait for the swiftest uprooting and sudden chastisement.

[2:276] *God effaces usury, but He augments voluntary almsgivings with interest. God loves not any guilty ingrate.*

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<sup>524</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote saying that al-Qushayrī shows the influence here of the teachings of the People of Blame (*malāmatiyya*) in Nishapur. For a description of their doctrine and practices in various times and places, see the article 'Malāmatiyya' in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

What is by His leave in different behaviors is connected to good things (*fa-maqrūn bi'l-khayrāt*) and accompanied by blessings (*wa-maṣḥūb bi'l-barakāt*), while that which follows whims will be effaced – the end of such a one's affair is loss.

[2:277] *Those who believe and perform righteous deeds, and establish the prayer, and pay the alms — their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.*

‘Verily for those who have found what is from Us sufficient for them – We do not squander the wage of those who do good’.

[2:278] *O you who believe, fear God, and give up the usury that is outstanding, if you are believers.*

Being content with what is promised (*maw'ūd*) by the Lord is better for the one who submits than attaching one's heart to what the lower self seeks (*maṣṣūd*). What you seek (*maṣṣūd*) is from the seductions of the lower self, while what you have been promised (*maw'ūd*) has been guaranteed by the Real.

[2:279] *But if you do not, then be warned of war from God, and His Messenger. Yet if you repent, you shall have your principal sums, not being unjust, and no injustice being done to you.*

Those who willfully persist have no weight or measure (*miqdār*) before Us, no standing or degrees of dignity (*akhṭār*).

[2:280] *And if any man should be in difficulties, then respite, till things are easier; but that you should give a voluntary almsgiving is better for you, did you but know.*

When the insolvency of a detained man has been determined before the judge, it is not permissible to continue his detention. If the proof of the man's insolvency has been demonstrated, that [proof] is taken in security for what is due his adversary but he is in a period of respite and delay. The Lord does not judge against us in this. Moreover,<sup>525</sup> with His

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<sup>525</sup> The translation follows the use of the particle *thumma* here from MSS K117, f. 31a and Y101, f. 39b.

knowledge of our difficulties and weakness, and the sincerity of our need for Him and our dedication to Him, He is merciful with us.

His words *till things are easier*: The insolvent poor man has no way to obtain anything for himself except through what God (s) has appointed for him as the portion of debtors. Income accrues to those who have the goods and the contract. What does the insolvent have to do with it? What does the insolvent have to do with profit in trade from the transformation of capital and what is done with it?

What is left for the insolvent? Those who speak for jurists say he must seek work assuming he is healthy.<sup>526</sup> If he is weak then this would apply only if he has enough physical strength. As for those who are bankrupt in vigor, just as one is bankrupt in wealth, what way remains for him except what his Protector appoints for him?

[2:281] *And fear a day wherein you shall be returned to God, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged.*

There are two kinds of return: in the future at the time of death with mortal beings and bodily selves, and at every breath a reckoning, a calling to account, and a promise with the innermost selves and hearts. Being called to account for His claim [at every breath] is more exacting (*adaqqu*)<sup>527</sup> than what will be at the Resurrection by His promise.

He said to ordinary people, ‘*And fear a day*’ and He said to the elect, ‘*and fear Me*’ [2:41].

[2:282-283] *O you who believe, when you contract a debt, one upon another for a stated term, write it down; and let a writer write it down between you justly; and let not any writer refuse to write it down, as God has taught him; so let him write, and let the debtor dictate; and let him fear God his Lord, and not diminish anything of it. And if the debtor be a fool, or weak, or unable to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate justly. And summon to bear witness, two witnesses, men; or if the two be not men, then one man and two women, such witnesses as you approve of, so that if one of the two women errs; the other will remind her; and let the witnesses not refuse, whenever they are summoned; and be not disdainful to write it down, small or great, with its term; that is more equitable in God’s sight, more upright for testimony, and nearer, that you will not be in doubt, unless it be trade carried out there and then that you give and take between you, then you will not be at*

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<sup>526</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been completed with the phrase *annahu yustas ‘ā hab annahu ṣaḥīḥ* found in MSS K117, f. 31b and Y101, f. 39b.

<sup>527</sup> The translation follows the word ‘more exacting’ (*adaqqu*) from MSS K117, f. 31b and Y101, f. 39b rather than the word ‘more worthy’ (*aḥaqqu*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

*fault if you do not write it down. And take witnesses when you are trading with one another. And let not either writer or witness be pressed; and if you do, that is sinfulness in you. And fear God. God teaches you and God knows all things. \* And if you are upon a journey, and you do not find a writer, then a pledge in hand. But if one of you trusts another, let him who is trusted, deliver his trust, and let him fear God his Lord. And do not conceal the testimony; whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful; and God knows what you do.*

God (s) has commanded creatures to act with sincerity (*ṣidq*). He taught them the particulars of their transactions with one other, and to adopt cautiousness and witnessing so that no injury will occur between them. That is in accordance with His mercy towards them and follows from His kindness to them, so that they will not argue with one another. He commanded the strengthening of rights in writing and taking witnesses. The command to witnesses is to take on the responsibility and execution of the task. What has been established for the present moment is intended to prevent disputes between them, for there should not be any traces of a dispute remaining in the end. There is a transmitted tradition, ‘*Strive with one another in giving gifts amongst yourselves, for I have already given My wealth to you, so surely the noble, when he can, forgives*’.

Among what which has been established regarding debt is compassion for those in need, because the state of need distresses and leads one to expediencies. The breast is straitened from bearing the burden and yet holding to comely behavior prevents one from begging and petitioning. He permitted for such a one the incurring of debt in order to help him in the situation and so that he might look to the favor of God in the end. He has promised the bountiful reward for lending money and that is from the kindness of God Most High.

[2:284] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Whether you disclose what is in your hearts or hide it, God shall take you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wishes, and chastise whom He wishes. And God has power over all things.*

*Whether you disclose what is in your hearts* in meanings (*ma ‘ānā*) and supplications (*da ‘āwā*).

It is also said *whether you disclose what is in your hearts* in intentions and wishes, various needs and requests.

It is said what *you disclose* is worship (*‘ibāda*) and what *you hide* is spiritual desire (*irāda*).



It is said what **you hide** are thoughts (*khaṭarāt*) and what **you disclose** are your states of rest and movement (*sakanāt wa 'l-ḥarakāt*).<sup>528</sup>

It is said the allusion in it is to perpetual observing (*istidāmat al-murāqaba*) and holding fast to self-accounting (*istiṣḥab al-muḥāsaba*) so that you will not be heedless for a moment, not even for a breath.

[2:285] *The Messenger believes in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and the believers; each one believes in God and His angels, and in His Books, and His messengers, 'we make no distinction between any of His messengers'. And they say, 'We hear and obey; Your forgiveness, our Lord; to You is the homecoming'.*

This is the testimony of faith (*shahāda*) of the Real (s) on behalf of His Prophet (ṣ 'a) and that is more perfect for him than his speaking for himself.

It is said all creatures believe through demonstrative proof (*burhān*) while the Messenger ( 'a) believes through eye-witnessing ( 'iyān).

It is said creatures believe through intermediaries while Muḥammad (ṣ) believes without one.

It is said this was the address of the Real with him on the Night of the Mi'rāj indicating respect for [his] rank: He said, 'The Messenger believes', not 'You [Muḥammad] believe', just as one says to an important person, 'the Shaykh said...' rather than 'you said...'.<sup>529</sup>

It is said both the Messenger and the believers believe in God, His angels, His books and His messengers, but what a difference between one faith and another! All believe through reasoning (*istidlāl*) but you, O Muḥammad, believe through communion (*wiṣāl*).

[2:286] *God charges no soul save to its capacity;*

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<sup>528</sup> i.e., what you do and don't do. The translation follows MSS K117, f. 31b and Y101, f. 40a here because it better fits the context. The Basyūnī edition reads, 'It is said what **you hide** are thoughts and what **you disclose** are outward expressions (*'ibārāt*). It is said what **you hide** are rests and movements'.

<sup>529</sup> i.e., the third person form of address is a show of respect.

Because of the perfection of His mercy to them, He takes them to the limit of their capacity, or much less than that. All of that is compassion and favor from Him.

[2:286 cont'd] *for it is what it has merited,*

in good deeds

[2:286 cont'd] *and against it is what it has earned.*

What it earns from repentance which is preserved from acquisition.<sup>530</sup>

[2:286] *Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget, or err; our Lord, burden us not with a load, such as You did lay upon those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us beyond what we have the power to bear;*

When a need arose [the community of Moses] spoke through the intermediary, saying, ‘O Moses,... pray to your lord for us’ [2:61].<sup>531</sup> But He said to the community [of Muḥammad], ‘Call on Me and I will respond to you’ [40:60]. When earlier communities sinned, they needed time to pass in order for the acceptance of repentance, while the Prophet (ﷺ) said about this community, ‘Remorse is repentance’.<sup>532</sup> Among the earlier community there were those who said, ‘make for us a god, just as they have gods’ [7:138], while this community was selected for the illumination of the lights of their declaration of oneness. Their characteristics are too many to be explained.

[2:286 cont'd] *and pardon us,*

In the present (*fī'l-ḥāl*).

[2:286 cont'd] *and forgive us,*

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<sup>530</sup> Basyūnī points out in a footnote that al-Qushayrī states that God is the creator of His servants actions, including their repentance, as he clearly states in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 4:26: He accepts your repentance after having created it, and then repays you according to what He has created for you in your repentance.

<sup>531</sup> This questioning through Moses is also mentioned in Qur’ānic verses 2:68, 2:69, 2:70, and 7:134.

<sup>532</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives Ibn Māja 4252 and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 1:376, 1:423, and 1:433, among many other sources for this *ḥadīth*.

In the end (*fī'l-ma'āl*).

[2:286] *and have mercy on us; You are our Patron; so grant us assistance against the disbelieving folk.*

‘In all circumstances for we have no one other than You. You are our Patron so give us assistance against anything that distracts us from You’.

When they said: *burden us not with a load, such as You did lay upon those before us*: God caused their sins to disappear in contrast to causing the disappearance of those who came before. He transformed their sins into good deeds in contrast to the metamorphosis (*maskh*) [of the community of Moses],<sup>533</sup> and He rained mercy down upon them in contrast to the stones He rained down on those who came before.

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

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<sup>533</sup> For the metamorphosis of the community of Moses, see Qur’ānic verse 2:65 above.

## Surāt Āl- ‘Imrān

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

The experts (*ahl al-taḥqīq*) have disagreed regarding the name *Allāh*. Is it derived in meaning [from some other word] or not? Many of them have said it is not derived in meaning and it belongs to Him (*s*) by way of exclusive possession, coined in the same manner as proper names describing others. When the utterance of this [word] reaches the ears<sup>534</sup> of the people of knowledge (*ahl al-ma‘rifa*), their different understandings and types of knowledge do not lead to any meaning other than His existence (*wujūd*) and His reality (*ḥaqq*), and the rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of this word<sup>535</sup> is that it will be related to the witnessing of the heart. Whether one says *Allāh* with the tongue or hears it with the ears, one is witnessing *Allāh* in the heart.

Just as this word does not indicate any meaning other than *Allāh*, what the speaker witnesses cannot be anything but *Allāh*. So he says *Allāh* with his tongue, knows *Allāh* with his heart (*fu‘ād*), recognizes *Allāh* with his heart’s core (*qalb*),<sup>536</sup> loves *Allāh* with his spirit (*rūḥ*), and witnesses *Allāh* with his innermost self (*sirr*). He is compliant in his outward self (*ẓāhir*) between the hands of *Allāh*, verifies the reality of *Allāh* in his innermost self, and devotes his states to *Allāh* and by *Allāh*. There is no portion in him for anything other than *Allāh*. When he is on the verge of becoming effaced in *Allāh*, for *Allāh*, by *Allāh*, the Real (*s*) overtakes him in His mercy. Then He discloses the words ***the Compassionate, the Merciful*** to them, sparing the very lifeblood that would [otherwise] pass away and desiring that their hearts be pure. The kindness of His (*s*) way (*sunna*) is such that His friends (*awliyā’*) will not be completely annihilated.

### 3:1 *Alif Lām Mīm*

By His saying, ‘***Alif***’, He alludes to His being sufficient for you in all of your states.<sup>537</sup> You are captive to heedlessness, and are not rightly guided to your [potential] righteousness and integrity. He is the One who sets in motion what restores you, and is solely sufficient for you

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<sup>534</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘ears’ (*asmā’*) from MS K117, f. 32a rather than the word ‘names’ (*asmā’*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>535</sup> The word *ḥaqq* can be translated as ‘reality’, ‘truth’ or ‘right’. When al-Qushayrī speaks of the *ḥaqq* of the name *Allāh* he is speaking both of its reality and what is due to it as its right.

<sup>536</sup> According to Lane, the distinction between *fu‘ād* and *qalb*, which are both usually translated as ‘heart’, is that the former refers to the pericardium, or more generally to the liver, lungs, and heart, while the latter refers only to the heart (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, pp. 2323-4).

<sup>537</sup> In connecting the letter *alif* to God’s being sufficient, al-Qushayrī is referring to its independent form in writing (i.e., the fact that in Arabic script *alif* does not connect to letters after it). See his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:1 above.

in what helps you. Without your asking – and even without you knowing your state – He suffices for you even if you do not perceive it. He gives to you without your seeking. The allusion from the **Lām** is to His kindness (*lutf*) to you at the most subtle and hidden level so much so that the locus of favor by which He strengthens you is not apparent to you. The allusion from the **Mīm** is to conformity (*muwāfaqa*) to the stream of the [divine] ordainment (*taqdīr*) through the circumstances requested by the friends. Nothing in the world moves, no particle appears unless it is an occasion of good pleasure with respect to them. It would not be going too far to say that in His words, *Every day He is upon some matter* [55:29], the ‘matter’ is an actualization of what the friends desire.

It is said that by listening to these disconnected letters [*Alif Lām Mīm*], which are contrary to the customs of human discourse, every concept disappears from the hearts, whether it be a known, written, customary or imagined thing, and whether it arises from necessity (*ḍarūra*),<sup>538</sup> sensory perception (*ḥiss*) or independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). When the hearts are emptied of imagined and known concepts, and the innermost selves are purified of customary and familiar things, the name *Allāh* comes to a heart sanctified from everything other (than Him) and to an innermost self purified of every mode [of inquiry] (*kayf*).<sup>539</sup>

[3:2] *God! There is no god except Him, the Living, the Eternal.*

He is the One who does not play so as to be too busy for you, nor is He inattentive so that you are left without Him. He is over all of your states the attentive observer (*raqīb*)<sup>540</sup> of your innermost self. If you are alone, He is watchful over you. If you are in the midst of human beings, He is watchful over you. In sum, however your states circle around you, He is your Beloved.

[3:3] *He has revealed to you the Book, by the truth*

You did not know, O Muḥammad, what the Book was, nor the story of the lovers. But a matter of pre-eternal choosing came suddenly upon you, and cast you into an amazing affair, its proof sublime, its place of descent and occurrence precious.

[3:3 cont’d] *confirming what was before it*

<sup>538</sup> Al-Qushayrī is distinguishing between three different modes of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge can come from ‘necessity’ (*ḍarūra*), i.e. *a priori* or self-evident knowledge; from sense perception; and from the exercise of reason.

<sup>539</sup> Literally, ‘howness’.

<sup>540</sup> God is described as watchful (*raqīb*) in Qur’ānic verses 4:1, 5:117, 11:93, 33:52.

i.e., verifying His promise to you in the books<sup>541</sup> that came through the prophets (‘a).

[3:3 cont’d-3:4] *and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel \* before as guidance to people, and He revealed the Criterion.*

That is to say, ‘Even though We revealed Our books to the messengers before you, We did not omit the remembrance (*dhikr*) of you from any book’. The one who spoke for them said:

*With me from our absent beloveds  
are pages.*

*The remembrance of you  
is their title page.*<sup>542</sup>

Just as We have extended the lights of the prophets through you, We have adorned all that We have revealed in remembrances with your remembrance.

[3:4 cont’d] *As for those who disbelieve in God’s signs, for them awaits a terrible chastisement.*

[The chastisement] is the ignominy of the veil but they do not perceive [this].

[3:4 cont’d] *God is Precious* (‘*azīz*’)<sup>543</sup> to His friends, *Lord of Retribution* to His enemies. Everyone seeks what is precious but most do not find it.

[3:5] *Nothing whatever is hidden in heaven and earth from God.*

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<sup>541</sup> The translation follows the plural form ‘books’ (*kutub*) found in MS K117, f. 32a rather than the singular ‘book’ (*kitāb*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>542</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Abū’l-Faṭḥ al-Bustī: *When people forget their brothers and are disloyal to love’s friends, with me from our absent companions are pages. The remembrance of you is their title page* (Muṣṭafā, no. 30, p. 119).

<sup>543</sup> The word ‘*azīz*’, which is usually translated as ‘Mighty’ in this Qur’ānic verse, also means ‘precious, cherished or valuable’.

A servant does not breathe a single breath without God (*swt*) counting it (*muḥṣīhi*). Not a particle exists in the heaven and earth unless He is its originator and creator (*mubdi'hi*). No one has any quality or attribute except His is its governor (*mutawallīhi*). This is the view of ordinary people (‘*umūm*). As for the elect (*khūṣūṣ*), no one presents a need to Him except He satisfies it (*qāḍīhā*) and no one has any resource in a calamity except He suffices for it (*kāfīhā*).

[3:6] *He it is Who forms you in the wombs as He will.*

[What has been formed] remains as it was created. He it is Who determined your states in eternity as He willed – this is still as it was and is from the divine decree and destiny.

[3:6 cont'd] *There is no god except Him, the Mighty, the Wise (al-ḥakīm).*

His decision (*ḥukm*) is not followed by any reversal (*naqḍ*). His ordaining (*taqdīr*) cannot be avoided by neglect or rejection (*rafḍ*).

[3:7] *He it is Who revealed to you the Book, wherein are verses [that are] clear, forming the Mother Book, and others allegorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow the allegorical part, desiring sedition, and desiring its interpretation, and none knows its interpretation, save God. And for those firmly rooted in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fī'l-‘ilm), say, ‘We believe in it; all is from our Lord’; yet none remembers [yatadhakkaru], but people of pith.*

He classified the [divine] speech for them; in its exoteric sense its revelation is clear (*fa-min zāhirin wāḍiḥu tanzīlihi*) and in its obscure sense its interpretation is difficult (*wa-min ghāmiḍin mushkilu ta'wīlihi*). The first portion is for explaining the Law and to guide the people of the exoteric sense. The second portion is to protect the disclosure of secrets from the viewing of outsiders. The way of the scholars (‘*ulamā'*) is to be firmly rooted (*rusūkh*) in seeking its meaning in conformity with the basic foundations (*uṣūl*) [of the religion], and what is attained by [this type of] inquiry meets with acceptance. They leave that which cannot be known by mental examination (*fikr*) to the world of the Unseen. The way of the people of allusion (*ishāra*) and understanding (*fahm*) is to listen with the presence of the heart (*ḥuḍūr al-qalb*). The glimmers of information that come to their understanding are based on the allusions of unveiling (*kashf*). If they have been asked to maintain the veil and conceal the secret, they feign dumbness. If they have been commanded to reveal and disseminate, they give voice to the explanation of the Real and speak of the information of the Unseen. Those who have been supported by the lights of insights are illuminated by the rays of the suns of understanding. Those who are clothed in the covering of doubt have been denied the

subtleties of realization. Their states are fractured, conjectures assail them and they are swept away in torrents of doubt and deception. Their ignorance only increases their denial<sup>544</sup> and their estrangement only increases their uncertainty.

***And none knows its interpretation, save God:*** The faith of those who find their knowledge from God will not suffer from meandering thoughts permitting [questionable interpretation]. Rather [their faith will be based] upon clear statements of plain meaning and sincere articulations of certainty. As for those with awakened intellects, they are in the company of remembrance (*tadhakkur*)<sup>545</sup> because of the appearance of demonstrative proofs and the careful examination<sup>546</sup> of the principles of obtaining [knowledge].

***[3:8] Our Lord, do not cause our hearts to deviate after You have guided us; and give us mercy from You; You are the Bestower.***

They do not increase in nearness unless they increase in refined behavior (*adab*). Taking refuge in maintaining distance is the most powerful means for respecting proper behavior (*adab*).<sup>547</sup>

It is said when they sincerely call for help in a beautiful manner, they are assisted by the lights of [divine] sufficiency.

***[3:9] Our Lord, You shall gather mankind for a day of which there is no doubt; verily God will not fail the trust.***

Today is the gathering of the lovers on the carpet of drawing near (*iqtirāb*), and tomorrow will be the gathering of all in the place of reward and punishment (*‘iqāb*). Today is the gathering of innermost selves (*asrār*) for the unveiling of [divine] Majesty (*jalāl*) and beauty

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<sup>544</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘denial’ (*jaḥd*) from MS K117, f. 32b rather than the repetition of the word ‘ignorance’ (*jahl*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>545</sup> Remembrance (*tadhakkur*) is the verbal noun from the verb *tadhakkara* found in this verse and many others in the Qur’ān in phrases such as ‘yet none remembers but people of pith’ (2:269, 3:7, 13:19, 14:52, 38:29, 39:9) and ‘will you not remember?’ (6:80, 10:3, 11:24, 11:30, 16:17, 23:85, 32:4, 37:155, 45:23, 56:62).

<sup>546</sup> The blank here in the Basyūnī edition has been completed with the word *sabr* found in MS K117, f. 32b, which means ‘testing, probing or endeavoring to learn’.

<sup>547</sup> To maintain distance means to remain conscious of servanthood, even after experiencing states of intimacy.



(*jamāl*), and tomorrow will be the gathering of human beings (*abshār*) for witnessing the terrors (*ahwāl*)<sup>548</sup> and enduring what has been told of these states (*aḥwāl*).

**[3:10] *As for the disbelievers, neither their riches nor their children will avail them against God; those – they shall be fuel for the Fire.***

No ransom will benefit them (*fa-lā fīdā' yanfa'uhum*), no riches defend them (*wa-lā ghanā' yadfa'uhum*). No wealth will be accepted from them, no veil will be raised from them, no statements heard regarding them. With them will blaze Hellfire (*al-jahīm*), and for them is a painful banishment (*al-ṭard al-alīm*), and distancing and boiling water (*wa'l-bu'd wa'l-ḥamīm*).

**[3:11] *As the way of Pharoah's folk, and the people before them, who denied Our signs; God seized them for their sins; God is severe in retribution.***

They persisted in insolence according to their way (*sunna*) and We caused them to meet retribution according to Our way (*sunna*).<sup>549</sup> From persisting [in insolence] they would not stop (*fa-lā 'an al-iṣrār aqla'ū*) and for good deeds they had no desire (*wa-lā fī'l-mabārri ṭami'ū*). By my life they are those who suffered regret and distress at what they put forward, but by that time they found the door blocked (*wajadū'l-bāb masdūdan*) and their repentance rejected (*wa'l-nadama 'alayhim mardūdan*).

**[3:12] *Say to the disbelievers: 'You shall be vanquished and mustered to Hell – an evil cradling!'***

He told them that they will lose the speech of the Real in the future (*ājil*),<sup>550</sup> and they have no delight in living in the present (*'ājil*). What they will meet in the Hereafter in the severe punishment by burning (*ḥurqa*) is on top of what they suffer in this world from absence and separation (*furqa*) from God, but their eyes have become weak so they have not perceived the painful punishment.

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<sup>548</sup> The translation follows the word 'terrors' (*ahwāl*) from MS K117, f. 32b rather than the word 'states' (*aḥwāl*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>549</sup> The translation here follows the word *sunna* found in MS K117, f. 32b rather than the word *sanān* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>550</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote stating that al-Qushayrī is referring here to the Qur'ānic verse 'God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them...' [3:77].

**[3:13] *There has already been a sign for you in two hosts that met; one company fighting in the way of God; and another unbelieving; they saw them, twice the like of them; for God confirms with His help whom He will. Surely in that is a lesson for people of vision.***

When God wants an affair to be accomplished, He makes many appear few in the eyes of one people and few to appear as many in the eyes of another people. If He covers the insights (*baṣīra*) of a people, the sharpness of their physical eyes (*abṣār*) will not benefit them. When He opens the innermost selves of others, the obstructing of their insights (*baṣā'ir*) will not harm them.<sup>551</sup>

**[3:14] *Beautified for mankind is love of lusts – of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God – with Him is the more excellent abode.***

He mentions some of the lusts which are equivalent in their meaning; included in the category is whatever veils you from witnessing (*shuhūd*). The most difficult of obstacles on this path is hidden lust. According to them,<sup>552</sup> seeking to find pleasure in performing acts of obedience is counted in the category of hidden lust. Among the problematic crossroads [on the path] is relying on what comes to you from the various ways of drawing near. It is like the circumstance of someone confiding in you and he flatters you. In every kindness he describes and praises you but under it is a hidden deception. [Instead] felicity comes to you by His unveiling to you through the witnessing of His Majesty and Beauty, not through His affirming you in the kindness of your states, nor through what you have been chosen for in His favors and drawing you near.

**[3:15] *Say: 'Shall I tell you of something better than that? For those that are fearful with their Lord are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, and spouses purified, and beatitude from God; and God is Seer, of His servants.***

He explained the superiority of the people who are God-fearing (*taqwā*) over the masters of the present world (*dunyā*). He said, 'For these people are the following of desires (*munā*) and conforming to whims (*hawā*), and for those people are degrees of elevation (*'ulā*), **and God is Seer, of His servants**'. He has caused each people to alight in their place and delivered each to what He has made most suitable for them.

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<sup>551</sup> In a footnote Basyūnī points out the progression from physical eyes (*abṣār*) to insights (*baṣā'ir*) to the opening of the innermost selves (*fath al-asrār*).

<sup>552</sup> i.e., the Sufis.

[3:16] *Those who say: “O, Our Lord, we believe; so forgive us our sins, and guard us from the chastisement of the Fire”,*

i.e., they occupy themselves with Us entirely (*bi'l-kulliyya*) and plead for help between Our hands at the mention of severe trials and afflictions (*al-raziyya*). Those obtain nearness and intimate friendship (*al-qurba wa'l-khuṣṣiyya*) with Us, high degrees (*wa'l-darajāt al-'uliyya*) and pleasing fates (*wa'l-qisam al-murḍiyya*).

[3:17] *the patient, sincere, obedient, expenders, imploring God's pardon at daybreak'.*

Patience is restraint of the lower self and consists of three levels: patience with what the servant has been commanded to do, patience with what has been prohibited him, and patience standing under the flow of His decree (*ḥukm*) according to what He desires, either in the passing away of what you love or in the onslaughts (*hujūm*)<sup>553</sup> outside of your control. When you rise beyond this quality in your being unaffected by any difficulty or comfort received, it is through contentment (*riḍā*), not patience (*ṣabr*).<sup>554</sup>

It is said *the patient* with the command of God, *sincere* in what they have promised God, *obedient* with their selves in pursuing the straight way in love of God, *imploring God's pardon* from all they have done because they see how much they have fallen short with God.

It is said *the patient* in their hearts, *sincere* in their spirits, *obedient* in their lower selves, and *imploring God's pardon* by their tongues.

It is said *the patient* with sincerity of seeking (*quṣūd*), *sincere* in contracts (*'uhūd*), *obedient* in protecting the limits (*ḥudūd*), and *imploring God's pardon* for their acts and states when the authority of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) takes over.

It is said *the patient* are those who are patient in seeking (*ṭalab*), not looking to escape (*ḥarab*), not ashamed to face toil (*ta'ab*), and they renounce every comfort and intense emotion (*ṭarab*).<sup>555</sup> They are patient in tribulation (*wa-ṣabarū 'alā'l-balwā*) and reject complaining (*wa-rafaḍū'l-shakwā*) until they come to the Protector (*ḥattā waṣalū ilā'l-*

<sup>553</sup> Basyūnī inserts a footnote referring the reader to the section on 'Unexpected raids and onslaughts' (*al-bawāḍih wa'l-hujūm*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 231).

<sup>554</sup> For the distinctions al-Qushayrī makes between patience (*ṣabr*) and contentment (*riḍā*), see the sections on each in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, pp. 397-404 and vol. 2, pp. 421-8).

<sup>555</sup> The translation follows the word *ṭarab* from MS K117, f. 33a rather than the repetition of the word 'seeking' (*ṭalab*) in the Basyūnī edition. *Ṭarab* is intense emotion that can be either joy or grief (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 1836).

*mawlā*). Nothing cuts them off in the present world and the world to come (*al-dunyā wa'l-uqba*).

**The sincere** are those who are firm and bold (*ṣadaqū*)<sup>556</sup> in seeking. They proceed with purpose (*qaṣadū*) and with firmness and boldness (*ṣadaqū*) until they arrive (*waradū*), then they are firm and bold until they witness (*shahidū*), then they are firm and bold until they find (*wajadū*), then they are firm and bold until they are lost (*faqadū*). Their sequence is seeking (*quṣūd*), then arriving (*wurūd*), then witnessing (*shuhūd*), then finding (*wujūd*), then extinction (*khumūd*).

**The obedient** are those who stay at the door (*bāb*), persevering in drinking sorrow (*ikṭi'āb*). They abandon things which they love (*maḥābb*) and reject companions (*aṣḥāb*) in order to recognize the truth by drawing near (*iqṭirāb*).

**The expenders** are those who give generously of themselves in their works (*a'māl*), then they give generously of their prosperity in wealth (*amwāl*), then they give generously of their hearts in the sincerity of states (*aḥwāl*), then they give generously by abandoning every portion belonging to them in the present and the future. They are utterly consumed at the moment of drawing near and communion (*wiṣāl*) through their experience of eradication and extirpation (*isti'sāl*).<sup>557</sup>

**Imploring God's pardon** from all of that [intoxicating experience of communion] when they return to sobriety and wakefulness **at daybreak** (*aṣḥār*),<sup>558</sup> i.e., at the appearance of white dawn (*isfār*). It is the dawn of hearts, not a dawn appearing in earthly regions (*aqṭar*).

[3:18] **God bears witness that there is no god, except Him,**

i.e., God knows, God informs, and God rules **that there is no god, except Him**. It is the bearing witness of the Real to the Real that He is the Real. The first one to bear witness that He is God is God and He bears witness in His eternity by His words (*qawl*), His speaking (*kalām*), and His primordial address (*khiṭāb*). He has given information of His singular

<sup>556</sup> The verb *ṣadaqa* means 'to act sincerely' but also 'to act with firmness and boldness'.

<sup>557</sup> To explain the words 'eradication' (*iṣṭilām*) and 'extirpation' (*isti'sāl*), Basyūnī refers the reader to a passage in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* that employs a Qur'ānic description of hell-fire as part of a metaphor of a potent drink: 'A cup that eradicates, annihilates, and snatches them away so that nothing remains of them. A cup which *neither spares nor leaves behind* [75:28] but effaces them completely, leaving not even a sliver of carnal human traces'. The passage appears in the section on 'Presence, Unveiling and Witnessing' (*al-muḥādara wa'l-mukāshafa wa'l-mushāhada*) (*Risāla*, vol. 1, p. 227).

<sup>558</sup> In other words, after experiencing intimacy, they return to servanthood.

existence, His eternal being, His everlasting unseen,<sup>559</sup> His continuous essence, His eternal majesty and His endless beauty. He said, ‘**God bears witness**’, then, throughout all time.

**God bears witness**, i.e., God makes things clear by what He demonstrates in proofs (*barāhīn*), establishes in indicators of certainty (*dalā’il al-yaqīn*), makes manifest in signs (*ayāt*), and discloses in indisputable evidence (*bayyināt*). In all that He has created and brought forth, and made manifest from the concealment<sup>560</sup> of non-existence, and produced according to what He wills, from independent things that are perceived (‘*ayān*) and the vanishing traces [left by things, actions or attributes] (*āthār*), from the essential qualities of things (*dhawāt*) in their potentiality and the attributes (*ṣifāt*) which come to be in specific places – each part [of this whole] is a clear expression of His existence and a plain elucidation of His Lordship, a witness (*shāhid*) to His Eternity, and a notifier to the intellects that He is One (*wāḥid*), Mighty, and Glorious (*mājid*).<sup>561</sup> He (s) bore witness to the majesty (*jalāl*) of His Measure and the perfection (*kamāl*) of His Might at the time when there was no denial, no ignorance,<sup>562</sup> no knowledge of any created thing, no intellect, no conformity, no disbelief, no events, no other, no deviation, no polytheism, no understanding, no falsehood,<sup>563</sup> no heaven, no space, no darkness, no light, no principles of what was rejected (*wa-lā uṣūl li’l-mardūdāt*)<sup>564</sup> and no deciding on differences in the affairs of time (*wa-lā fuṣūl bi-ikhtilāfi’l-awqāt*).<sup>565</sup>

[3:18 cont’d] *and the angels,*

He did not add strength to His bearing witness to His oneness (*waḥdāniyya*) by the bearing witness of the angels.<sup>566</sup> Rather, He gladdened and strengthened them when He directed them to the right course in bearing witness to Him, and when He guided them to knowledge of His oneness.

[3:18 cont’d] *and those of knowledge;...*

<sup>559</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘unseen’ (*ghayb*) in MS K117, f. 33a rather than the word ‘succor’ (‘*awn*) found in the Basyūnī edition,

<sup>560</sup> The word here is ‘concealment’ (*katm*) in the Basyūnī edition, and what looks to be ‘treasure’ (*kanz*) in MS K117, f. 33a.

<sup>561</sup> Al-Qushayrī expresses something similar to this passage in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:116 above.

<sup>562</sup> The translation follows the word ‘ignorance’ (*jahl*) from MS K117, f. 33a rather than the word ‘effort’ (*juhd*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>563</sup> The translation follows the word ‘falsehood’ (*ifk*) from MS K117, f. 33a rather than the word ‘reflection’ (*fikr*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>564</sup> The translation follows this phrase found in MS K117, f. 33b rather than the phrase found in Basyūnī: *wa-lā wuṣūl li’l-mazdūjāt*.

<sup>565</sup> The translation follows this phrase found in MS K117, f. 33b rather than the phrase found in Basyūnī: *wa-lā fuḍūl bi-ikhtilāfi’l-āfāt*.

<sup>566</sup> i.e., the Real had no need for the angels to bear witness to His singularity.

They are the friends (*awliyā* ' ) from among the Children of Adam since they know the majesty of His Power and they recognize the attribute of His Might. He honored them when He associated His bearing witness to their bearing witness. They bear witness from witnessing and discernment (*shuhūd wa-ta'yīn*), not from conjecture and quessing (*ẓann wa-takhmīn*). If they do not have knowledge of something at a given time by necessity or by sensory perception (*ḍarūratan wa-ḥissan*),<sup>567</sup> they do not believe it by conjecture and surmise (*ẓannan wa-ḥadsan*). He makes Himself known to them so they come to know Him. He calls them to bear witness and because of that they bear witness. If He did not tell them who He is, they would not know. But the religious scholars ( *ulamā* ' ) bear witness by the clarity of their intellects while those who have experienced God's unity (*muwahḥidūn*) bear witness after their extinction. They are as it is said:

*Consumed by the force of the Real,  
they have been extinguished.  
After their being annihilated,  
they are made to speak of God's unity.*<sup>568</sup>

The One Who brings about what appears from them is other than them. The One Who stands in for them in what they are up against and in – is other than them. They were but became separate (*kānū lakinnahum bānū*).<sup>569</sup> The one who spoke for them said:

*My book to you  
was after my death by a night.  
I didn't know  
I would write after my death.*<sup>570</sup>

**Those of knowledge** are on different levels, such as the knower whose quality is conformity [to God's command and decree] and religious disciplines (*rahbāniyya*); the knower whose attribute is annihilation owing to<sup>571</sup> His Lordship (*rabbāniyya*); the knower who recognizes the rulings of His permitted and prohibited things; the knower who knows His reports

<sup>567</sup> See the footnote to the commentary on Qur'ānic verse 3:1 above.

<sup>568</sup> This verse could not be located in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>569</sup> Al-Qushayrī is echoing the words of Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, whom he quotes in his *Risāla* as defining 'the knower' ( *ʿarīf* ) as a man who was but became separate (*kāna fa-bāna*). (*Risāla*, 'Section on Knowledge of God' (*bāb al-ma'rifati bi-Llāh*), vol. 2, p. 608). The same quote is referenced in al-Qushayrī's comments on Qur'ānic verse 2:152 above.

<sup>570</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 17, p. 28).

<sup>571</sup> The translation follows the particle *li* from MS K117, f. 33b rather than *wa* from the Basyūnī edition.

(*akhbār*), practices (*sunan*), and traditions (*āthār*);<sup>572</sup> the knower who knows His book and is aware of its exegesis (*tafsīr*) and interpretation (*ta'wīl*), its clear verses and revelation; the knower who knows His attributes and His qualities, and studies<sup>573</sup> His proofs and unity;<sup>574</sup> and the knower whom He treats with kindness until He causes him arrive, then He unveils to him and overwhelms him so the name (*ism*)<sup>575</sup> remains while the perceived entity (‘*ayn*’) is effaced, and the decree (*ḥukm*) arrives while the servant fades away. The one who spoke for them said:

*The sons of the Real*

*are nourished solely by the Real,*

*so the attribute of the Real*

*is adopted within them.*<sup>576</sup>

The allusion from this is only to their annihilation from their sensory perceptions (*iḥṣāṣ*) and from<sup>577</sup> the different types of knowledge<sup>578</sup> [acquired] through their lower selves. As for their entities (‘*ayān*’), they are created and what will come to pass<sup>579</sup> by their essential natures (*dhawāt*) in their states is predetermined. The Essence of the Real is not characterized by any possible contingency, and the attributes of His Essence do not permit a connection with anything other [than Him], nor any separation from the Essence. The Real is sanctified from every opposite and equal, union and division, gathering and separation, entity<sup>580</sup> and creation, dominion and celestial body, mark and trace (*athar*), servant and human being (*bashar*), sun and moon (*qamar*), individual person and dust (*ghabar*).<sup>581</sup>

[3:19] *Lo, the religion (dīn) with God is submission (islām) (to the One God).*

<sup>572</sup> In other words, someone who knows the *ahādīth*.

<sup>573</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘studies’ (*yastaqrī*) from MS K117, f. 33b rather than the word *yastaqwī* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>574</sup> The Basyūnī edition has *bi-ḥadīth yakhruj* followed by a blank. The MS K117, f. 33b goes directly from ‘His unity’ (*tawhīdihī*) to the next category of knowers.

<sup>575</sup> Perhaps al-Qushayrī means here that only the Divine Attributes remain, or he may be saying that the name of the individual remains while his human attributes are effaced.

<sup>576</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 19, p. 62). The translation follows the version found in MS K117, f. 33b version: *banū ḥaqq ghadhū bi'l-ḥaqq ṣīrfan fa-na't al-ḥaqq fīhim musta'ār*.

<sup>577</sup> The translation follows the word ‘an’ from MS K117, f. 33b rather than ‘inda’ from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>578</sup> The translation follows the word ‘ulūm’ from MS K117, f. 33b rather than ‘ilm’ from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>579</sup> The translation follows the word *yaqūmu* from MS K117, f. 33b rather than the word *yafamu* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>580</sup> MS K117, f. 33b has the word ‘other’ (*ghayr*) instead of ‘entity’ (‘*ayn*’).

<sup>581</sup> The word ‘dust’ sounds a little odd in the translation, but follows a rhyming pattern towards the end of the listing of things from which God is sanctified.



**Religion (dīn):** The [religion] that He is pleased with, and the one whose follower He has determined to reward, elevate and cause to meet favor, is submission (*islām*). Submission (*islām*) is sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and the surrendering of oneself (*istislām*). Anything else is rejected (*mardūd*) and the path to salvation for its follower is blocked (*masdūd*).

[3:19 cont'd] *Those who were given the Scripture, differed only after the knowledge came to them through transgression among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in God's signs, God is swift at reckoning.*

**Knowledge ('ilm) came to them** which was a proof (*ḥujja*) incumbent upon them – not [the deeper] knowledge (*ma'rifa*), which would be clear evidence (*bayān*) and a path (*maḥajja*) for them.<sup>582</sup> They persisted in denial (*juḥūd*) because they were veiled from the place of witnessing (*shuhūd*).

[3:20] *So if they dispute with you, say: 'I have surrendered my countenance to God and whoever follows me': and say to those who have been given the Scripture, and to the uninstructed: 'Have you submitted?' And so if they have submitted, they have been guided, but if they turn their backs, your duty is only to deliver; and God sees His servants.*

'Look at them through the eye of [God's] free disposal (*taṣrīf*) so that your state does not become unsettled at the differences and the disparity of their stages.'<sup>583</sup> One who looks at created beings through the eye of [God's] deliberative power (*qudra*) knows that the One who determines for all, based on what He has chosen for each, is One. Call them publicly when in public and bear witness to Our free disposal to them privately when in private'. Occupy your tongue with counseling them, empty your heart of their talk, and separate your innermost self from witnessing them, for We have not charged you with their affairs except to deliver [the message]. The One who bring about affairs and originates is Us'.

[3:21] *Those who disbelieve in the signs of God and slay the prophets without right, and slay those who enjoin to equity. So give them good tidings of a painful chastisement.*

'Those whom We have bound to forsakenness (*khidhlān*) and branded with the state of deprivation (*ḥirmān*) – tell them that Our turning away from them is eternal and that We

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<sup>582</sup> The translation here follows *lahum* from MS K117, f. 33b rather than *lahā* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>583</sup> Perhaps al-Qushayrī has a reference to Qur'ānic verse 71:14 in mind here: *when verily He created you in stages* (aṭwār).



already decreed their transference from one abode of disgrace (*hawān*)<sup>584</sup> to another, from disappointment (*khidhlān*) and deprivation (*ḥirmān*) to punishment and fires (*nīrān*)’.

**[3:22] *Those are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter; they have no helpers.***

Those are the ones for whom no success is granted in their works (*tawfīq bi-a ‘māl*) today, nor realization of their hopes (*taḥqīq li-āmāl*) tomorrow. That is only because they have lost Our help in both abodes and did not bear witness to Our Might and Power.

**[3:23] *Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Book, being called to the Book of God, that it might decide between them, and then a party of them turned away (yatawallā), opposed?***

‘We have tested you with calling those whom We already know will not answer. So be patient with what you have been commanded regarding them. Know the misfortune of their states. They are the people who turn away (*ahl al-tawallī*) from answering (*ijāba*) because they have been deprived of the beauty of divine self-disclosure (*ḥusn al-tajallī*)<sup>585</sup> by Our prior will (*irāda*)’.

**[3:24] *That, because they said, ‘the Fire shall not touch us, except for a number of days’; and the lies they used to invent have deluded them in their religion.***

We have punished them in this world, drawing them on by degrees (*bi’l-istidrāj*)<sup>586</sup> until they [presume to] determine salvation and the lessening of punishment for themselves, but they will come to know the doubling of affliction upon them. They think they are on to something but they are liars. [It is] the conjecture of those in error [presented] as judgment.

**[3:25] *But how will it be when We gather them for a day of which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged?***

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<sup>584</sup> The Basyūnī edition has ‘gardens’ (*al-jinān*) here but the repetition of ‘disgrace’ (*al-hawān*) in MS K117, f. 33b makes more sense and has been followed in the translation.

<sup>585</sup> For a discussion of the term ‘self-disclosure of God’ (*tajallī*) see the section on ‘Veiling and Disclosure’ (*al-sitr wa’l-tajallī*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol.1, pp. 224-5).

<sup>586</sup> This echoes the wording in Qur’ānic verses 7:182 and 68:44: *We will draw them on by degrees (sa-nastadrijuhum), whence they do not know.*

This address is remarkable because by it He gives information about the imposing grandeur and intensity of the affair before the perplexity of their intellects, the astonishment of their innermost selves, the cutting off of their pretensions, the tearing out of their hearts from their hidden places, and [the soul's] rising to their collar bones,<sup>587</sup> then what meets them from the reckoning and censure (*al-ḥisāb wa'l- 'itāb*), the torment and punishment (*al- 'adhāb wa'l- 'iqāb*), and the lack of honoring and affirmation ( *'adam al-ikrām wa'l-ījāb*), etc. The resurrection of the disbelievers will take place on the Day of Gathering, whilst the resurrection of the lovers takes place in the present moment; to explain this fully would take a long time.

[3:26] *Say: 'O God (Allāhumma), Master of the Kingdom,*

*Allāhumma*: Its meaning is 'O God'. The letter *mīm* at the end (of the word) is a substitute for the vocative particle *yā*. This is a teaching of the Real on how to praise the Real, i.e.: 'Describe me as I should be described in exalted measure',<sup>588</sup> saying: 'O **Master of the Kingdom**, there is no associate to You, no assistant, no helper, no companion, no partner to You in essence, no sharer in the Kingdom, no competitor in creating'.

[3:26 cont'd] *you give the Kingdom to whom You will, and seize the Kingdom from whom You will;*

'So that we will know that You are the King.'<sup>589</sup> The king among created beings is he to whom one is humbled, and what is seized is the kingdom of those who are haughty towards Him. The beautifying (*tajammul*) of created beings is in their abasing themselves (*tadhallul*)<sup>590</sup> before the Real. Their might ( *'izz* )<sup>591</sup> is in their effacement (*maḥw*) in Him and their remaining (*baqā* ) is in their annihilation (*fanā* ) in Him.

[3:26 cont'd] *You exalt (tu 'izzu) whom You will,* by the might ( *'izz* ) of Your Essence.

[3:26 cont'd] *and You abase (tudhillu) whom You will;* by Your forsaking.

<sup>587</sup> The translation here follows the phrase *wa-tarraqāhā ilā tarāqīhim* from MS K117, f. 34a, which would appear to be a reference to Qur'ānic verse 75:26: *When it reaches up to the collar bones.*

<sup>588</sup> As opposed to those who *measure not God with His true measure* (Qur'ānic verses 6:91, 22:74, 39:67)

<sup>589</sup> The translation here follows the word 'King' (*malik*) found in MS K117, f. 34a rather than the phrase 'the Kingdom is Yours' (*al-mulk laka*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>590</sup> *Tadhallu* is the verbal noun corresponding to the verb *tudhillu* found in this verse.

<sup>591</sup> The noun *'izz* is derived from the same root as the verb *yu 'izzu* found in this verse.

*You exalt whom you will*, guiding him to witnessing You and declaring Your oneness, and *You abase whom You will* so that he denies You and is deprived of You. *You exalt whom you will* with the good fortune of approaching You and *You abase whom You will* by the estrangement of Your turning away. *You exalt whom You will* by bringing him to intimacy with You and *You abase whom You will* by estranging him from You. *You exalt whom You will* by occupying him with You and *You abase whom You will* by distracting him from You. *You exalt whom You will* by the fall of the controlling elements of his lower self, and *You abase whom You will* by giving the upper hand to its clamor. *You exalt whom You will* by the gleams of the rising (*ṭawāli*)<sup>592</sup> of his intimacy and *You abase whom You will* by the night visitors (*ṭawāriq*)<sup>593</sup> of his lower self. *You exalt whom You will* by expanding (*baṣṭ*) him through You and *You abase whom You will* by constricting (*qabḍ*) him from You.

*You give the Kingdom to whom You will* by tightening the belt of service to You, and *seize the Kingdom from whom You will* by excluding him from the carpet of worship to You. *You give the Kingdom to whom You will* by causing his innermost self to be singularly devoted to You, and you *seize the Kingdom from whom You will* by binding his heart to some created thing. *You exalt whom you will* by raising him up in spiritual desire (*irāda*) and *You abase whom You will* by sending him back to what the people of habit (*ahl al-‘āda*) do.

[3:26] *in Your hand is good.*

He did not mention evil, protecting the good manners (*ādāb*) of speech, being auspicious in mentioning the beautiful, and avoiding the inauspicious mention of evil.

[3:26] *You are Able to do all things.*

In veiling and attracting, helping<sup>594</sup> and forsaking, accepting and rejecting, separating and gathering, constricting and expanding.

<sup>592</sup> Al-Qushayrī discusses the ‘gleams of the rising’ (*ṭawāli*) in the section in his *Risāla* on ‘Glimmers, Gleams of the Rising and Flashes’ (*al-lawā’ih wa’l-ṭawāli wa’l-lawāmi*), (vol. 1, pp. 228-230).

<sup>593</sup> Al-Qushayrī uses a similar comparison of rising lights and night visitors in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:115: ‘The hearts have rising lights (*shawāriq*) and night visitors (*ṭawāriq*). The night visitors are the murmurings (*hawājis*) of the lower selves that arrive in the darknesses of desire and carnal passions. The rising lights are the stars of different types of knowledge, the moons of presence and the suns of gnosis.

<sup>594</sup> Basyūnī adds ‘helping’ (*nuṣra*) to balance the word ‘forsaking’ (*khidhlān*) he found in the manuscript he was working from. The word does not occur in MS K117, f. 34a.

[3:27] *You make the night pass into the day and You make the day to pass into the night; You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from the living, You provide whom You will without reckoning*’.

*You make the night pass into the day* so that the authority of the light of unity (*tawhīd*) prevails and nothing remains of the traces of the lower self and its darknesses. *You make the day pass into the night* so that it is as if the suns of the hearts were eclipsed, or as if the night continued and the morning was lost.

*You bring forth the living from the dead* so that it is as if listlessness was no more and the covenant of communion returned as a youth, and the promises of hearts became young and fresh. *You bring forth the dead from the living* until it is as if the tree of discontent sprouted and blossomed thorns, and as if the hopeless found nothing better and could not smell [the fragrance], and *their hearts and eyes were confounded, just as they did not believe in it the first time* [6:110].

*You provide whom You will without reckoning* so that there is no labor (*kadd*),<sup>595</sup> no exertion (*jahd*), no sweat on the brow (*jabīn*), and no toil of the right hand (*yamīn*). His night is refreshment and repose (*rāḥa*), and His day is joy and delight (*bahja*). His hours are special gifts (*karāmāt*) and His moments are ways of drawing near (*qurubāt*). The different kinds of acts of His favoring cannot be enumerated by the tongue (*lisān*) and the inquiry into their full depth cannot be given expression or explanation (*bayān*). But in the glimmers we have given, there is some indication of how to speak of this.

It is said when He said: *and seize the Kingdom from whom You will*, there is a rude awakening for the drunken intoxication of anyone who thinks that he is a king, because he now sees his kingdom is vulnerable to extinction and knows that abasing himself to [God] in preserving His kingdom is worthier than vainglorious delusion and pomposity.

It is said the king, in the real sense of the word, is one whom nothing distracts from witnessing the One Who is the real King.

[3:28] *Let not the believers take the disbelievers as patrons, rather than the believers —*

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<sup>595</sup> The translation follows the word ‘labor’ (*kadd*) found in MS K117, f.34a rather than the word *kadar* found in Basyūnī. Basyūnī himself points out in a footnote that *kadd* would be preferable here.

Among the realities of faith is friendship (*muwālā*) and enmity (‘*adāwā*) on behalf of God. The one whom it would be best for you to renounce and turn away from among the disbelievers is your lower self. Its nature is Magian in that it says, ‘Mine, from me, and through me’.<sup>596</sup> God Most High said: *O you who believe, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you* [9:123].

Verily belief in this path (*ṭarīqa*) is rare and precious. Even if ordinary people who have no belief in this path were to wear themselves out with extreme asceticism and effort, they would not be among the people of Your friendship (*muwālā*). Like with like is more suitable.

[3:28 cont’d] *for whoever does that, does not belong to God in anyway – unless you protect yourselves against them, as a safeguard. God warns you of His Self: and to God is the journey’s end.*

Companionship (*ṣubḥa*) with the Real (s) and nearness to Him can by no means be combined with the companionship of adversaries and being close to them.

**God warns you of His self.** This is an address to the elect among the people of mystical knowledge (*ma’rifā*). As for those whose degree is less than that, He has said to them: *fear the fire that...* [3:131] and He said: *fear a day wherein you shall be returned* [2:281], and so on in other verses.

It is said **God warns you of His self** in that you may be of the opinion that you have arrived, but surely the imperceptible affairs of the divine deception (*makr*) can happen to the most respected. The one who spoke for them said:

*I felt safe from him*

*but the safe place granted to me was a ruse.*

*Such it is for those*

*who feels safe from lovers.*<sup>597</sup>

<sup>596</sup> Al-Qushayrī is attributing a belief to Magians here that opposes his understanding of divine unity (*tawḥīd*). Basyūnī adds a footnote referring the reader to a passage in the ‘Section on Unity’ (*bāb al-tawḥīd*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* which resembles the commentary here: ‘It is said that divine unity is the dropping of personal pronouns so that you do not say, “Mine, through me, from me or to me”’ (vol. 2, p.587). See also al-Qushayrī’s commentary on Qur’ānic verse 4:78 below.

<sup>597</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 13, p. 28).

It is said *God warns you of His self* because anyone who imagines that a created being can reach Him or that the feet of human aspiration can touch the carpet of might – Glory and Might be to the Absolute Oneness! And anyone who thinks that [God] has brought them near, in reality [God] has made them distant from Him.

**[3:29] Say: ‘Whether you hide what is in your breasts, or disclose it, God knows it and knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; and God is Able to do all things.’**

There is nothing that escapes His knowledge, so do not be grieved by any calamity that afflicts you. Soon He will bring you succor and response, and soon the affliction and trial will disappear. He will hasten [His] assistance and protection.

**[3:30] The day every soul shall find what it has done of good present before it, and what it has done of evil, it will wish that between it and that there were a great distance.**

The people of acts of obedience (*ahl al-ṭā‘āt*) will wish that they had sought more of them. The people of acts of disobedience (*ahl al-mukhālafāt*) will wish that they had curbed their reins in from galloping in the open fields. The one who spoke for them said:

*Even if I had been given the object of my desire  
in my time here on earth,  
not everyone who is granted the object of his desire  
is pointed in the right direction.*

*Surely I would have said to the days gone by:  
Will you not return?  
And I would have said to the days to come:  
Will you not keep your distance?<sup>598</sup>*

**[3:30] God warns you of His self, and God is kind to His servants.**

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<sup>598</sup> Muṣṭafā gives sources attributing these verses to Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmi and others (Muṣṭafā, no. 19, p. 48).

The allusion from His words **God warns you of His self** is for those with mystical knowledge (*‘ārīfūn*) and the allusion from His words **and God is kind to His servants** is for those who seek comfort.<sup>599</sup> Those are the companions of force and compulsion and these are the companions of lightening and ease.

And it is said when He said, **‘God warns you of His self’**, those hearing the address are necessarily frightened,<sup>600</sup> so He said in combination with it, **‘and God is kind to His servants’** in order to give them reason to hope, so His way (*sunna*) is to evoke desire and fear in them at the same time.

It is said He annihilates you in His saying **‘God warns you of His self’**, then brings you back to life and causes you to remain in His saying **‘and God is kind to His servants’**.

[3:31] **Say: ‘If you love God, follow me, and God will love you, and forgive you your sins; God is Forgiving, Merciful.**

**You love God** is a separation (*farq*) and **God loves you** is a gathering (*jam*).<sup>601</sup>

**You love God** mixed with cause (*‘illa*)<sup>602</sup> but **God loves you** without cause; rather, He is the reality itself of communion. The love of the servant for God is a state of subtle kindness (*laṭīfa*) he finds with respect to himself and this state brings him into conformity with His command out of pleasure (*riḍā*),<sup>603</sup> without any feeling of compulsion. This state necessarily involves his preferring [God] (*s*) over everything and everyone. The condition of love is that there can be no worldly concern (*ḥazz*) in any state. One who has not been entirely annihilated from his worldly concerns possesses not even a sliver of love. The love of the Real for the servant is in His desire (*irāda*), His beneficence (*iḥsān*) and His kindness (*lutf*) to him. It is a desire (*irāda*) to bestow favor, in the sense of His (*s*) praise and commendation of [the

<sup>599</sup> Instead of ‘those who seek comfort’ (*musta’nisūn*), the Basyūnī edition has the word *musta’naḥūn* or *musta’nifūn* here, which makes little sense. The assumption has been made that this is a typographical error. The relevant portion of the sentence is missing in MS K117, f. 34b, which goes from ‘those with mystical knowledge’ straight to ‘Those are the companions of force...’

<sup>600</sup> The translation follows the word *tahwīl* found in MS K117, f.34b rather than the word *taḥwīl* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>601</sup> For more information on how al-Qushayrī uses these terms, see the section on ‘Gathering and Separation’ (*al-jam ‘ wa’l-farq*) in his *Risāla*, (vol. 1, pp. 207-8).

<sup>602</sup> The word *‘illa* means both ‘cause’ and ‘infirm’; al-Qushayrī may have both senses of the word in mind here.

<sup>603</sup> For more on what al-Qushayrī means by this term, see the ‘Section on Satisfaction’ (*riḍā*) in his *Risāla* (vol.2, pp. 421-7).

servant] and in the sense of His special favor to him. Or this can be [understood as] coming from the attributes of His actions.<sup>604</sup>

It is said the precondition of love is your entire effacement from yourself because of your being consumed in your beloved. The one who spoke for them said:

*What is love*

*until the eye is exhausted by weeping*

*and you lose your ability to talk*

*so that you cannot answer one who calls you.*<sup>605</sup>

This is a difference between the beloved (*al-ḥabīb*)<sup>606</sup> and the friend (*al-khalīl*).<sup>607</sup> The friend [Abraham] said, ‘*So whoever follows me, verily belongs with me (minnī)*’ [14:36], and the beloved [Muhammad] said, ‘*follow me and God will love you*’. The follower of the friend belongs with him (*minhu*) in the conferring of favor, while the follower of the beloved is the beloved of the Real (*s*) and that suffices for nearness and as a state (*ḥāl*).

It is said that for those who submit themselves, He cuts off their longing for anything but their model and leader of the first and the last – Muhammad (*s*).

It is said there is an allusion in this verse to the fact that love is not an effect (*ma’lūl*) and is not brought about by obedient acts or the avoidance of evil, because He said, ‘*God will love you, and forgive you your sins*’. He explained that is possible that a servant may have many sins,<sup>608</sup> but nonetheless he loves God and God will love him.

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<sup>604</sup> A more detailed passage from ‘The Section on Love’ (*bāb al-maḥabba*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* makes it clear that al-Qushayrī presents two views regarding God’s love. In the *Risāla* he explains that, according to one teaching, God’s love for human beings arises from the attributes of His essence (i.e., the divine attributes that exist with God), and according to another teaching, His love belongs to the attributes of His actions (i.e., the attributes He produces with regard to His creation). This section also explains the use of the word ‘desire’ (*irāda*) in relation to God. According to al-Qushayrī, ‘desire’ is an attribute of God that is referred to by various names, such as ‘wrath’, ‘mercy’, and ‘love’, depending on its objects (vol. 2, p. 611-2).

<sup>605</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the verse in a somewhat different version to Majnūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 123).

<sup>606</sup> i.e., Muḥammad.

<sup>607</sup> i.e., Abraham.

<sup>608</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘sins’ (*dhunūb*) from MS K117, f. 35a rather than the word *funūn* found in the Basyūnī edition.



It is said that first He said, '**God will love you,**' and then He said, '**and forgive your sins**'. The [conjunction] '**and**' (**wa**) determines the order so that it will be known that love is prior to forgiveness. First *He loves them and they love Him* [5:54], then He forgives them and they seek His forgiveness. Love leads to forgiveness; pardon does not lead to love.<sup>609</sup>

[The word] 'love' (*maḥabba*) indicates the purest or most choice (*ṣafā*) of states: from the same root is derived the expression 'shining teeth' (*ḥabab al-asnān*), which is their being bright and clear (*ṣafā*).<sup>610</sup>

Love demands complete devotion in the innermost self in the presence of the beloved.

It is said the camel '*aḥabba*' when he kneels down and will not move despite striking.<sup>611</sup>

Love (*ḥubb*) consists of two letters, *ḥā* and *bā*. The allusion from the *ḥā* is to the spirit (*rūḥ*) and from the *bā* to the body (*badan*). The lover does not hold back in either his heart or his body from his beloved.

[3:32] *Say: 'Obey God, and the Messenger'. But if they turn their backs, God loves not the disbelievers.*

He commanded them to obedience, and then He said, '**But if they turn their backs**', i.e., fall short in obedience, acting in oppositional ways, then **God loves not the disbelievers**. He did not say 'the disobedient' (*āṣiyyūn*) but rather 'the disbelievers' (*kāfirūn*), so the address indicates that he loves the believers even if they are disobedient.

[3:33-34] *Lo! God preferred Adam and Noah and the House of Abraham and the House of Imrān above the worlds, \* the seed of one another; God is Hearer, Knower.*

Adam and his seed are compatible in material substance, but the characteristic of being chosen is something that comes from Him, not through kinship or relation.

<sup>609</sup> The negative here follows MS K117, f.35a. Instead of *lā*, the Basyūnī edition has *li-anna*.

<sup>610</sup> In a similar passage in the 'Section on love' (*bāb al-maḥabba*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī states that phrase *ḥabab al-asnān* is said about teeth that are white and fresh (vol.2, p. 613).

<sup>611</sup> This is another etymological comment. In his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī states that the word *aḥabba*, a verb that means 'to love', also occurs in the expression *aḥabba al-ba'īr*, which refers to 'a camel that kneels and will not stand up. Likewise the lover refuses to move from the remembrance of his beloved in his heart' (vol. 2; p. 613).

[3:35-36] *When the wife of 'Imrān said, 'Lord, I have vowed to You what is within my womb as a consecration. Accept this from me. Lo! It is You Who are the Hearer, Knower. \* And when she gave birth to her, she said, 'Lord, I have given birth to a female' – and God knew very well what she had given birth to the male is not as the female. 'And I have named her Mary, and commend her to You with her seed to protect them from the accursed Satan'.*

The one who is consecrated (*muḥarrar*)<sup>612</sup> is someone who is not in bondage to any created being. The Real (s), in His prior decree, has emancipated such a one from the bondage of preoccupation [with anything other than the Real] in all intentions and states. When the mother of Mary made this vow and gave birth to a female, she was ashamed.<sup>613</sup> When she saw her she said, '*Lord, I have given birth to a female*' and she cannot be consecrated. God Most High said, '*and God knew very well what she had given birth to*'. By my life, the male is not like the female in outward appearance, but when the Real (swt) accepted her every miracle appeared from her.

When she said, '*I have vowed to You what is within my womb*', she said, '*Accept this from me*'. He granted her request, and the effects of the acceptance appeared in her and her son. One set of beings was saved by their story, and another was destroyed and experienced a trial (*fitna*) because of the two of them.<sup>614</sup>

She said, '*And I have named her Mary, and commend her to You with her seed to protect them from the accursed Satan*'. She sought protection from God from there being anything in her words belonging to Satan.<sup>615</sup>

[3:37] *Her Lord accepted the child with gracious acceptance, and made her grow excellently, and Zachariah took charge of her.*

Inasmuch as He caused her to attain more than what her mother had wished for. It is said that [God] *accepted her with a gracious acceptance (qabūl ḥasan)* in His making her unique in obedience to Him, and entrusting her with that which He entrusts His friends (*awliyā*) – so

<sup>612</sup> The word *muḥarrar* literally means 'one who is emancipated' but also refers to the practice of consecrating individuals to service in a temple.

<sup>613</sup> Because she thought her vow was in vain.

<sup>614</sup> The translation here follows the wording and pronouns found in MS K117, f. 35a rather than the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>615</sup> The sentence ends here in MS K117, f. 35a. The sentence in Basyūnī continues with a phrase which appears to have been mistakenly inserted into the text. This same text occurs in al-Qushayrī's commentary on Qur'ānic verse 3:94: 'what is easiest in order to perfect what comes to them from the decrees of the hearts'.

much so that everyone of her time was astonished by the excellence (*husn*) which He entrusted to her affair even though she was a girl.

It is said that the **gracious acceptance** was the excellence (*husn*) of [God's] care for her in spite of His (s) knowing what would be said about Him because of her, for He is not concerned with the shamefulfulness of the words of enemies.

*I find blame in passion*

*for you delicious.*

*Out of love of hearing you mentioned,*

*let them blame me.*<sup>616</sup>

Just as it is said:

*Let anyone*

*who wishes*

*say what he wishes.*

*I don't care!*<sup>617</sup>

It is also said that the **gracious acceptance** was His causing her to grow in the quality of protection (*iṣma*) until she said: *I seek refuge in the Merciful from you if you fear God* [19:18].

**And made her grow excellently** until she stood straight in obedience and preferred His (s) good pleasure in every moment, and until the fruit from her was such a one as Jesus (‘*a*). This was the excellent growth. Zachariah took charge of her and it was part of the gracious acceptance and excellent growth that he made such a one as Zachariah (‘*a*) among the prophets her guardian, and the caretaker and protector of her affairs. God revealed to David (‘*a*), ‘If you see someone seeking me, become a servant to him’.

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<sup>616</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū’l-Shīṣ, and gives numerous books in which it is cited. He also attributes it to ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ja‘afarī b. Abū Ṭālib (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p. 103). Al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in the introduction to his commentary on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* above.

<sup>617</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a somewhat different version of this verse attributed to Mūsā ‘Abd Allāh b. Ismā‘īl that is different from al-Qushayrī’s version (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, pp. 92-3).

[3:37 cont'd] *Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary, where she was, he found her with provisions. 'O Mary', he said, 'Whence comes this to you?' She said, 'From God. Truly God provides for whomever He will without reckoning'.*

One of the signs of the gracious acceptance was that she could never be found anywhere except in the sanctuary (*miḥrāb*). Whoever dwells and stays where He is worshipped, that is where the sanctuary is and that is a rare and precious servant.

It is also said that the gracious acceptance was that all of her affairs and concerns were not subject to Zachariah (‘a) so that when he entered to care for her with food, he found her with provision. This was so that the people of the worlds<sup>618</sup> might know that God (s) does not burden others with the concerns of His friends (*awliyā*), and that anyone who serves one of His friends is included in the kind company (*rifq*) of the friend – there should be no difficulty for him because of the friends. There is an allusion in this to the fact that one who serves the poor (*fuqarā*) should know that he has been included in the kind company of the friends, not that the poor are beneath him.<sup>619</sup>

Then Zachariah (‘a) used to say, ‘*Whence comes this to you?*’, because he did not believe that she was worthy of this preferred rank and he was afraid that someone other than him was taking the opportunity of caring for her and supplanting him in performing these duties. So he asked, ‘*Whence comes this to you?* Who gave it to you?’ Mary said, ‘[It is] *from God*, not from any created being’. In that there were two things to comfort Zachariah. One of them was the witnessing of her station and her special gift (*karāma*) with God Most High, and the second was that no one had supplanted him in serving her. In His words *Whenever (kullamā) Zachariah went into the sanctuary, where she was, he found her with provisions*, the word *kullama* means ‘repeatedly’ and this is an allusion to the fact that Zachariah (‘a) did not cease caring for her, even though he found her with provision. Rather, every day and at every moment he was studying her state because the special gifts (*karāmāt*) of the friends do not necessarily persist. It is possible that God will make something appear in them indefinitely or He may not, so Zachariah (‘a) did not rely on [them persisting] and thus neglect to study her state. So he would question her again saying, ‘*O Mary, whence comes this to you?*’ because of the possibility that that which exists today may not be as it was yesterday – this is not something that is incumbent upon God (s).

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<sup>618</sup> The typographical error ‘*āmilūn*’ in the Basyūnī edition has been corrected with the word ‘*ālamūn*’ from MS. K117, f. 35b.

<sup>619</sup> The translation here follows MS K117, f. 35b here rather than the Basyūnī edition, which says, ‘There is an allusion in this to the fact that one who serves the poor should know that he has been included in the kind company of the poor’. In the ‘Section on Companionship’ (*bāb al-suḥba*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī talks about different types of companionship. When one serves someone of superior rank, the companionship is service. The obligation of the superior individual is compassion and kindness to the one of lower rank and the obligation of the one with lower rank is compliance and respect for the individual of higher rank (vol. 2, p. 574).

His words *Truly God provides for whomever He will without reckoning* is a clarification of divine unity itself (‘*ayn al-tawḥīd*). It is that His provision and beneficence towards the servants is according to His will, and does not result from their obedience and is not brought about by means of their acts of worship.

[3:38] *Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord, saying, ‘Lord, bestow upon me from You a goodly offspring, verily You are the Hearer of supplication’.*

i.e., when he saw the special gift (*karāma*) of God (s) with her, he grew more and more certain, and more and more hopeful, so he asked for a son in spite of his advanced age. The granting of his request was a rupture of ordinary reality (*naqḍ al-āda*).

It is said that Zachariah (‘a) asked for a son to be a help to him in obedience, and an heir from his progeny in prophethood, so that he might uphold the right of God (*ḥaqq Allāh*). So it was a request which deserved to be granted. When a request is for the right of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) and not for the pleasure of the self (*ḥaẓẓ al-nafs*) He will not refuse it. Zachariah (‘a) saw Mary with summer fruits in the winter and winter fruits in the summer, so he asked for a son in his old age so that it might be a sign (*āya*) and a miracle (*mu‘jiza*).

[3:39] *And the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary at worship*

When the petitioner asks and stays at the door, the request is granted to him. In this is an allusion to the fact that anyone who needs something from kings should stay at the door until the request is granted.

It is said that the ruling of God (s) is such that He only responds to the request of those who embrace service (*khidma*) to Him, and He casts those who turn away from obedience into the shame of loneliness.

[3:39 cont’d] *that ‘God gives you good tidings of John, who shall confirm a Word from God; a lord, and one chaste, and a prophet of the righteous’.*

It is said he named him John (*yaḥyā*) because of the life (*ḥayāt*) of his heart through God. Exegesis tells us that the barrenness of his mother [returned to] life through him.

It is said that [he was named John] because the cause of life for anyone who believes in Him is through his heart.

His saying ‘*who shall confirm a Word from God (Allāh)*’ means his confirmation of the word *Allāh* by which he worshipped Him, or that he was brought into being (*mukawwan*) by the Word of God.

His saying ‘*a lord*’: The lord is one who is not in bondage to any created thing. He has been freed (*taharrara*) from captivity to his whim and from every created thing. It is said the lord is someone who has actualized his servanthood<sup>620</sup> to [God] (*s*). It is said the lord is the one who is superior to the people of his age, and John was such.

It is said *lord* because he did not seek any station for himself, nor did he view himself as having any worth. When he dedicated himself in humility to God in every way, He caused him to rise above the group and made him a lord to all.

His saying ‘*and one chaste*’, i.e., liberated from passions and spared from carnal human properties despite being human. It is said [it means] being protected from the demands of his lower self, restraining from that by engaging in exaltation and seeking to draw near. It is said the uprootings (*isti ʿālāt*) coming to him through the intuitions of realities prevented him from holding on to any preference for a worldly concern.

*And a prophet of the righteous*, i.e., he was worthy of attaining their rank.

[3:40] *He said, ‘My Lord! How shall I have a boy when old age has overtaken me, and my wife is barren?’ He said, ‘So it will be’. ‘God does what He will’.*

It is said there was a long time between his petition and the reply, and because of that he said, ‘*How shall I have a boy?*’<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> The translation here follows the word ‘servanthood’ (*ʿubūdiyya*) found MS K117, f. 35b rather than the word ‘sublimity’ (*ʿulwiyya*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>621</sup> In his commentary on this verse, al-Qushayrī is reflecting the concern found in *tafsīr* works as to how a prophet could question a message he received. Al-Qushayrī adds nothing new to this material, which can be found in Ayoub’s compilation and summation of several commentaries (Ayoub, vol. 2, pp. 112-15).

It may mean that he said, ‘By what right of mine could there be this reply to me, if not by Your favor?’

It may mean that he said, ‘How shall this be: by adoption or sexual procreation?’

It may mean whether this was to be from a woman other than his wife, who was [also] of advanced age, or from taking a slave as a concubine. So it was said to him, ‘No, not through these means, for both (you and your wife) have suffered the loneliness together, so the good news of the son is for both of you.’

[3:41] *He said, ‘My Lord! Appoint for me a sign’. He said, ‘Your sign is that you shall not speak to men, save by tokens for three days.*

He sought the sign so that he would know the time of the reply more precisely,<sup>622</sup> not because of any doubt regarding the source of the replying. He made the sign of His proof<sup>623</sup> the restraining of his tongue with created beings while loosening it with God in glorifying Him, i.e., ‘Do not refrain from speaking with me for I do not deprive My friends of My intimate conversations (*munājāt*)’.

[3:41 cont’d] *and remember your Lord often*

In your heart and your tongue in every moment.

[3:41 cont’d] *and glorify [Him] at evening and dawn’*

In persistent prayer.

[3:42] *And when the angels said, ‘O Mary, God has preferred you, and made you pure; He has preferred you above all women of the worlds.’*

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<sup>622</sup> i.e., when the son would be born.

<sup>623</sup> Basyūnī notes the word here is *dalāla*, which he says is acceptable in meaning, but he nonetheless changes it to *walāya*. I have stayed with *dalāla*, since that is also the word in the MS K117, f. 35b text.

It is possible that this was the beginning of a message from the angels to Mary elevating her state. It is possible that she may have heard their words and seen them, or that she did not see them but heard them as a voice calling out to her, 'Truly God has chosen you because of your having been preferred, and singled you out from your kind and peers, and purified you from what is indecent and sinful by a beautiful immunity and from having physical contact with men, and has chosen you above the women of the world of your time'. The point of repeating the mention of being chosen is firstly, He has chosen you through special gifts, position, and an exalted state; and secondly, He has chosen you to bear Jesus ('a.') without a father, and no woman can ever be compared to you until the Day of Resurrection. Because of that He said: *above all women of the worlds.*

[3:43] *'O Mary, be obedient to your Lord, prostrating and bowing with those who bow'.*

Persevere on the carpet of worship and pursue obedience, and do not fall short in the continuation of service. Just as the Real has singled you out by your station, so must you be the most unique of your time in worshiping Him.

[3:44] *That is of the tidings of the Unseen. We reveal it to you for you were not with them, when they were casting quills, which of them should have charge of Mary; nor were you with them, when they were disputing.*

i.e., We are informing you [Muḥammad] of these stories and speaking with you about their meaning. If it is We Who are telling you these stories, Our Speech is exalted, and [it is] more exalted and more perfect than if you had been a witness to [these events].

[3:45-46] *When the angels said, 'O Mary, God gives you good tidings of a Word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honored shall he be in this world, and the Hereafter, and of those brought close. \* He shall speak to mankind in the cradle, and in his manhood, and he is of the righteous.'*

She was not given good tidings about her portion in this world, nor fortunes in the Hereafter. Rather, she was given good tidings of what had been established in [the birth of Jesus] in a weighty sign, and his being a prophet of God, a confirmation of the miracle.

It is said He informed her that whoever falls into the overwhelming divine deliberate power and ends up before His decree will encounter miracles of that power which no one has experienced. Indeed, Mary lived for a long time with an excellent reputation and recognized chastity. Then He confused the outward appearance of this state with what people viewed as a



blameworthy event. But in actuality it was not as the foolish, whose eyes were drunken from witnessing the course of the divine determination, thought.

It is said that He informed her of this situation<sup>624</sup> gradually and in detail. He told her that that son would live until he spoke to mankind as a youth and in manhood and that the deception of enemies would not affect him.

It is said *in manhood* after his descent from the heavens.<sup>625</sup>

It is said He fortified her heart in informing her that when she would hold her tongue regarding her innocence [after the birth], God would cause Jesus (‘a) to speak as proof of her sincerity and exaltedness.

[3:47] *She said, ‘Lord, how shall I have a child when no mortal has touched me?’ He said, ‘It is such. God creates what He will.*

Just as you witnessed the appearance of things contrary to ordinary reality in the provision which We gave to you, likewise We will annul ordinary reality by creating a son without the contact of a man.

[3:47] *When He decrees a thing,*

i.e., He desires a ruling (*ḥukm*) to come to pass

[3:47] *He says to it only: “Be”, and it is’.*

Origination and creation are not difficult for Him. When they began to blame her, God caused Jesus (‘a) to speak when he was one day old, saying: *I have come to you with a sign from your Lord* [3:49].

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<sup>624</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a blank here, which the translation attempts to resolve with somewhat ambiguous language from MS K117, f.36a.

<sup>625</sup> Al-Qushayrī is referring here to the period of time after Jesus returns. His age at that time will be that of ‘manhood’ (*kahl*), which is defined as the period of middle-age between youth and old age.

[3:48-9] *And He will teach him the Book, wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel. \* To be a messenger to the Children of Israel, 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, I will create for you out of clay like the shape of a bird then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird by the leave of God. I will also heal the blind and the leper; and I bring to life the dead, by the leave of God. I will inform you too of what things you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.'* (3:48-9)

These were His outward signs and dazzling, overpowering proofs: bringing life to the dead, healing the blind and the leper, telling what they did secretly, and other miracles. [God] stated that [Jesus] confirmed what came before him in laws. He was chosen to abrogate part of what came before in the law and to establish another part for them according to the details articulated in the Qur'ān.

[3:52] *And when Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said, 'Who will be my helpers unto God?' The disciples said, 'We will be helpers of God; we believe in God; witness that we have submitted.'*

When the message reached them and they differed – some of them believed him and some of them called him a liar, and they were the majority – he knew that prophecy does not remove affliction and the force of enemies from you. So he separated his heart from them and held to his goal (*qaṣd*). He said to his people: ***Who will be my helpers unto God*** so that they may help me in being devoted exclusively to His True Reality and being sincerely dedicated to His goal? Then those over whom the effects of solicitude were spread and those who were chosen through the effects of selection (*takhṣīṣ*) said: ***We will be the helpers of God; we believe in God; bear witness to us in sincerity but do not trouble yourself on our account in anything.***

[3:53] *Lord, we believe in what You have revealed, and we follow the Messenger;<sup>626</sup> inscribe us therefore with those who bear witness.*

As for those who remained behind, they worked for discord and their enmity increased. They plotted deceptions for him and schemed, but God made them taste the evil of their scheming. They imaged that they crucified Jesus (‘*a*) and killed him but that was from their ignorance and confusion. God (*s*) raised Jesus (‘*a*) as His prophet and friend (*walī*). Banishment and cursing are appropriate for His enemies. This was His scheming with them: ***And they schemed; and God schemed; and God is the best of schemers*** [3:54].

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<sup>626</sup> In the MS K117, f. 36b there is a line of commentary here that does not appear in the Basyūnī edition: And we will not treasure up from You anything that has been provided (a reference back to verse 3:49).

[3:55] *When God said, ‘O Jesus, I am gathering you’...*

The allusion in it: ***I am gathering you*** from yourself, seizing you from yourself, raising you above the mortal human attributes, and purifying you from your desire (*irāda*) completely so that you will act as Our agent (*muṣarrif*) through Us and for Us, and there will be nothing of your own free choice for you, and there will be the falling upon you of the divine governorship (*tawallī*) standing in for you. By this quality, bringing the dead to life appeared at his hands, events which can only happen by the divine deliberative power, may it be exalted.

It is said He purified his heart from looking to others, and from seeing likenesses (*amthāl*) and traces (*āthār*) in all states and phases.

[3:55 cont’d] *...and I am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection...*

In help (*nuṣra*), force (*qahr*), and proof (*ḥujja*). His followers –those who have not made changes in his religion (*dīn*) and those who follow his creed in the declaration of oneness (*tawḥīd*) – are believers (*mu’minūn*). They are in the right until the Day of Resurrection, and they have help until the Day of the Resurrection. Then God (s) will judge between them and their enemies on the Day of Resurrection. The disbelievers will be in hellfire (*jaḥīm*) and the believers will be in felicity (*na’īm*).

[3:58] *This We recite to you of verses and wise remembrance.*

***This We recite to you***, O Muhammad, to inform you of the meanings of what We have revealed to you. [These meanings do not reach you] through your exertion to attain knowledge, nor by your learning from parables, nor by your deduction by any sort of reasoning.

[3:59] *Truly the likeness of Jesus in God’s sight, is as Adam’s likeness...*

He chose both of them to be purified of the spirit (*rūḥ*) from passing from one body to another (*tanāsukh*) in the loins.<sup>627</sup> He singled out Adam in creating him by His own hand, and Jesus

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<sup>627</sup> In other words, both Adam and Jesus did not have fathers, so the spirit (*rūḥ*) was ‘breathed into’ them (see Qur’ānic verses 15:29; 21:91; 32:9; 38:72; and 66:12).

(‘a) in selecting the blowing of the spirit into him<sup>628</sup> as a form of honor. Even though these two were weighty beings, the imperfection of events and creatureliness were nonetheless unavoidable for them: ... *then He said to him, ‘Be’, and he was* [3:59].

[3:60] *The truth is from your Lord...*

The truth (*al-ḥaqq*) is from your Lord, O Muhammad, so have absolutely no doubt that there is no one who resembles Him (*s*) in causing existence. No created thing has any power over the establishment of His way.<sup>629</sup> The existence of things that exist has been conferred from the hiddenness of nonexistence – their beginning is from God and to Him is their return.

[3:61] *And whoever disputes with you concerning him...*<sup>630</sup>

It means that after you have revealed the truth of that which was said to you, and the knowledge of that which We spoke to you has been confirmed as true in your heart, do not be reticent in imposing the mutual cursing. Trust that you have the force (*qahr*) and help (*nuṣra*), and that We are guarding over you and have sheltered you in the wing of Our nearness. If they had sought this mutual cursing, the wadis would have burned them as raging fires, but God (*s*) gave them respite because of His knowledge of the believers [to come] in their loins.

The allusion in this verse is to one whose state has descended from the states of the sincere. When the lights [of the sincere] appear, what remains of the others fades away without a trace.

[3:62] *This is the true story...*

The dust of confusion has no authority over the witnessings of divine unity. No delusion of any created being reaches the secret of His ruling (*ḥukm*). No known thing included within existence can come close to it. No imagined thing can conceptualize the decree (*taqdīr*).

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<sup>628</sup> Qur’ānic verse 21:91 uses the feminine pronoun while verse 66:12 uses the masculine pronoun, as is used here. Commentators such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explain the use of the masculine pronoun in verse 66:12 by saying that the spirit was blown into the unborn child.

<sup>629</sup> The Basyūnī printed edition has the word *baynahu* here, which makes little sense. In the MS K117, f. 36b, the word could be read as *sunnatihi*, *sunanihi* or *sababihi*.

<sup>630</sup> The full verse is: *And whoever disputes with you concerning him, after the knowledge that has come to you, say: ‘Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our selves and your selves, then let us humbly pray and invoke God’s curse upon those who lie’* [3:61]. The verse is said to refer to a delegation of Christians from Najran who questioned the teachings of the Prophet.

[3:63] *And if they turn their backs, God knows the agents of corruption.*

*And if they turn their backs*, O Muhammad, the confusion of those who talk falsely has no permanence before the rays of your lights.

*God knows the agents of corruption*: either He will sweep them away or He will be forbearing until their conjectures have become firmly established. Then He will seize them all of a sudden and they will not be helped.

[3:64] *‘O People of the Scripture! Come now to a word agreed upon between us and you,*

It is the word of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) and bearing witness in singling out the Real (*s*) alone in creating things.

[3:64 cont’d] *that we worship none but God...*

Do not look in your innermost self (*sirr*) to any created thing. There should be no object of worship for you other than Him. There should be no aim or object of witnessing other than Him. This is the protection against polytheism (*shirk*). You yourself are foremost among the ‘others’ that should not be witnessed.

[3:64 cont’d] *...and do not take each other for lords, beside God...*

The sincerity in this is made manifest in abandoning praise and blame of [‘others’], removing complaining or doubt about them, and cleansing the innermost self from taking into account so much as a speck of erasure (*maḥw*) or affirmation (*ithbāt*) as coming from them.<sup>631</sup> He (*s*) said: *The truest verse the Arabs sung was Labid:*

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<sup>631</sup> In other words, one witnesses that only God erases and affirms. In his use of the terms ‘erasure’ (*maḥw*) and ‘affirmation’ (*ithbāt*), al-Qushayrī echoes Qur’ānic verse 13:39: *God effaces whatever He will and He affirms [whatever he will], and with Him is the Mother of the Book*. See also the section on ‘Erasure and Affirmation’ (*al-maḥw wa’l-ithbāt*) in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 1, pgs. 222-3; Knysh translation p. 96).

*Isn't everything*

*other than God unreal (bāṭil) ?*

*Every blessing*

*is inevitably fleeting (zā'il).*<sup>632</sup>

**[3:65] ‘O People of the Scripture Why do you argue about Abraham’...**

He put a covering of possessiveness and a veil of jealousy over His friend (‘a), and cut off his relationship from all of them after their accusation regarding him. His judgment opposed their specious arguments. How could Abraham (‘a) belong to the religion of those who came after him? This makes no sense.

**[3:66] *Lo! You are those who dispute about what you know; why do you then dispute concerning that of which you have no knowledge?; and God knows, and you know not.***

It means that what was in your Scripture possessed clear evidence and should therefore be a proof for you. He designated either truth or falsehood in that for them. So regarding that for which you have no definitive evidence, or any way of knowing, how can you begin to judge it or make claims to comprehend it?

**[3:67] *No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian, but he was a Muslim and a ḥanīf...***

The *ḥanīf* is the one who stands straight (*mustaqīm*) on the right way. The *aḥnaf* is one who is *mustaqīm* with bow legs – the one who leans with his feet in this way is called *mustaqīm* for good luck.<sup>633</sup> Abraham (‘a) was a *ḥanīf*, not bending from the truth and not swerving from the law, and not zigzagging according to anything in which there is a share belonging to the soul. He surrendered his wealth, his soul, his son, and everything altogether to the ruling (*ḥukm*) of God and to waiting for His command.

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<sup>632</sup> Muṣṭafā gives several sources for this verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p. 93). ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives several sources for the *ḥadīth* and the poetry: Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Māja, Ibn Hanbal and Al-Tibrīzī. After the verse from Labid, there is a passage in the Basyūnī edition that does not appear in MS117, K37a. Because this same passage appears in the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:94 below and makes more sense in that context, it has been omitted here under the assumption that it is an error of the copyist.

<sup>633</sup> The root of these words is *ḥ-n-f*, which can mean ‘to incline’ or ‘lean’. The word *aḥnaf* refers to a bow-legged person. The word *ḥanīf*, then, can be understood as ‘inclining to a right state or tendency’ (Lane, 1: 658). As Basyūnī points out in a footnote, al-Qushayrī is demonstrating how the word *ḥanīf* can refer to the opposing concepts of ‘standing straight’ and ‘leaning’.

**[3:68] *Surely the people with the best claim, Abraham, are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe; and God is the Protector of the believers.***

When whims (*ahwā`*) and blameworthy innovation (*bid`*) scatter and each faction ends up in error, and the people of truth in every era, time and moment hold to the best proof, then they will be a single party and they will be the best protectors of one another. Abraham was a follower of truth and whoever professes his religion – like our Messenger (ﷺ) and his community – belongs to the religion of Abraham (‘*a*), which is the profession of the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God (swt).

***And God is the Protector (walī) of the believers*** because they have been entrusted with His religion and they conform to His unity. The friendship (*walāya*) of God can only be through aid (‘*awn*), help (*nuṣra*), selection (*takhṣīṣ*) and nearness (*qurba*).

**[3:69] *There is a party of the People of the Scripture who yearn to make you go astray; yet they cause none to stray, except themselves...***

Those who have come to discord, who have been afflicted by tribulation and seduced by temptation wish for all people what has come to them. The People of the Scripture wanted the believers to turn from the truth, but God willed that His light would be completed and the evil of their actions would revert back to them.

**[3:70] *O People of the Scripture! Why do you disbelieve in God’s verses, when you yourselves bear witness?***

[You bore witness] before his mission (ﷺ) to the authenticity of his prophecy.<sup>634</sup> What is it that brings you to error so that you disavow what you know?

**[3:71] *O People of the Scripture! Why do you confound truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth while you know?***

They conceal the truth regarding the affair of Muhammad (ﷺ) even as they know that he is the true prophet. Can this be anything other than the divine judgment of forsakenness and the

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<sup>634</sup> This refers to the understanding that Muḥammad’s arrival as a prophet is foretold in the Scripture.

decree of exclusion? Then He informed them that among them are those who were hypocritical regarding their situation. They wanted to defend themselves from the annoyance of the Muslims and to avoid conflict with their brothers among the disbelievers, so they publicly assumed an attitude of agreement with the Messenger (ﷺ) and the Muslims, while secretly remaining true to their corrupt beliefs amongst themselves.

**[3:72] *A party of the People of Scripture say, ‘Believe in what has been revealed to those who believe at the beginning of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it, so that they might then turn back.***

God (ﷻ) explained that their hypocrisy was exposed to the Muslims and that it had not benefited them, either in this world because of God informing His Prophet (ﷺ) and the believers of it, or in the Hereafter because of the loss of their fidelity in it.

**[3:73] *And do not believe except in one who follows your religion’...***

This may refer to the beginning of a command from God (ﷻ) to the Muslims. The allusion in it is that you should not associate on intimate terms with opponents, nor divulge your secrets to outsiders.

**[3:73 cont’d] *...Say: ‘Surely bounty is in God’s Hand...***

He is the One who singles out whom He will for the lights of instruction and singles out whom He will for abandonment and deprivation.

**[3:74] *He singles out for His mercy whom He will; God is of bounty abounding’.***

***He singles out*** whom He will with all kinds of blessings by His mercy. The ‘mercy’, according to this [way of reading the phrase], is a cause for the designation of whomever He wishes for the blessing. There is definitely an elision [in this phrase], for it is possible that in [the phrase] ***He singles out His mercy for whom He will***, ‘mercy’ does not function as the cause. The ‘mercy’ according to this interpretation would mean prophecy and friendship (*walāya*). And it would mean protection ( *‘isma*) and anything from all the portions of good



deeds by which He singles out a particular servant. This would be included in His words: ***He singles out for His mercy***, i.e. for His blessing.<sup>635</sup>

He singles out some people for the blessings of moral traits, some for the blessing of provisions, some for the blessing of servanthood, others for the blessing of spiritual desire (*irāda*), others for success in external things, others with the gift of an easier life,<sup>636</sup> and others for encountering secrets. He said: *And if you were to count God's blessing, you could never reckon it* [14:34, 16:38].

It is said when they heard: ***He singles out whom He will for His mercy***, they knew that it has nothing to do with any means of attainment.<sup>637</sup> Rather, the command comes by origination (*ibtidā'*) and divine will (*mashī'a*).

Is it said ***He singles out whom He will for His mercy*** in comprehending what He reveals of the secrets to him and what He gives to him in different types of information.

[3:75] *And of the People of the Scriptures is he who, if you trust him with a hundredweight, he will return it to you; and of them is he who, if you trust him with one dinar, will not return it to you...*

He informs us that they, in spite of their error and disbelief, are different in their moral qualities. All of them are unfaithful to the religion (*dīn*), but among them are those who return to proper (human) interactions. Even though they interact with sincerity, it will not benefit them in the granting of the reward, but it will benefit them in lessening the punishment since disbelievers are held accountable in the details of the laws. If, in their disbelief they sinned less, they will suffer less punishment than those who have lost the most, even though their punishment will also be eternal.

Then He explained that the judgment is not theirs, so that when *they say, 'We have no duty towards the Gentiles'* [3:75] this situation is not as they believe, nor do these words benefit them. Rather, the judgment belongs to God (s).

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<sup>635</sup> Al-Qushayrī seems to be distinguishing here between these two ways of reading this phrase. The first would be: By His mercy, God singles out whom He will for his blessings. The second would be: God singles out His mercy [i.e., the prophets and friends, and his protection] for whom He wills.

<sup>636</sup> The word 'easier life' (*aysār*) from MS K117, f.37b makes more sense here than the word *abshār* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>637</sup> The wording in the MS K117, f.37B has been followed here: *al-wasā'il laysa bi-hā shay*.

[3:76] *Nay, but whoever fulfils his covenant, and has fear...*

Those who hold to the covenant are more deserving of communion, being honored and the Garden. Being the object of hatred, ignominy and being exposed to shame is more appropriate for those in error.<sup>638</sup>

[3:77] *Those that sell God's covenant and their own oaths for a small price, there shall be no share for them in the Hereafter; and God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them and theirs will be a painful chastisement.*

Those who prefer their caprice (*hawāhum*) over their final outcome (*ʿuqbāhum*) and have given priority to their desires (*munāhum*) over harmonious agreement with their Protector (*mawlāhum*),<sup>639</sup> will have no share in the Hereafter. Because they chose the seeking of pleasure in the present, they have lost in the two abodes. They remain apart from the Real. What they sought in pleasure in worldly portion (*ḥazz*) brought together all kinds of tribulations upon them, but they were not aware of what hit them: ***God shall not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them.*** Moreover, along with that, He will cause them to abide in eternal punishment.

[3:78] *And there is a group of them who twist their tongues with the Book, so that you may suppose it as part of the Book; yet it is not part of the Book; and they say, 'It is from God', yet it is not from God, and they speak falsehood against God, while they know.*

The allusion in this verse is to those who are false in their claims on this path (*ṭarīqa*). They embellish what they say and let loose their tongues concerning that about which their hearts have no information or verification, deceiving the foolish, ordinary people and novices. They imagine that they have verification of what they say. In describing them, God Most High said: ***so that you might suppose it is as part of the Book; yet it is not part of the Book.*** Likewise, the lords of deception and fraud direct their talk to the weak. As for the people of realities, their secrets are unveiled before them.

God Most High said: ***and they speak falsehood against God, while they know***, i.e., they know that they are speaking falsely. Likewise the people of falsehood and deception on this way (*ṭarīqa*) speak from ruined hearts and veiled selves. We seek refuge in God from becoming hateful.

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<sup>638</sup> The Basyūnī edition omits Qur'ānic verse 3:76 and its commentary. This paragraph is translated from MS K117, f.37b.

<sup>639</sup> Note the rhyming pattern.

[3:79] *It belongs not to any mortal that God should given him the Book, the Judgment, prophethood, then that he should say to men, ‘Be servants to me instead of God’. Rather, ‘Be masters, by virtue of what you know of the Book and in what you study’.*

i.e., it is not a quality of anyone whom We have chosen him for prophethood or selected him for friendship (*walāya*) to call created beings to himself or teach anything affirming himself or his worldly fortune, because His (s) choosing them for prophethood includes protecting them from what is not permissible. To allow that as an attribute of theirs would be incompatible with their state. Rather, the messengers and the friends call created beings to God (*swt*). It is the meaning of God Most High’s words: **Rather, ‘Be masters’** [3:79], i.e., He commands them to be masters to created beings. ‘Those who have special knowledge of the Lord’ (*rabbānī*) is related to [the word] ‘lord’ or ‘master’ (*rabb*) just it is said, ‘So and so is “bull-necked” (*raqabānī*) or “full of life” (*hayyānī*)’ and the like.<sup>640</sup> They are those who have knowledge of God, who are gentle in God, standing firm through God<sup>641</sup> in their annihilation from anything other than God. Their worldly fortunes consumed, they are immersed in the realities of His existence rather than their sensory perception through their own states. They speak, hear, and see by means of God, and so they are effaced from what is other than God.

It is said the master (*rabbānī*) is one who has had the shadow of his lower self (*nafs*) lifted from him and he lives in the shelter of His (s) shadow.

It is said the master is he who does not affirm anyone other than his Lord as one, and does not bear witness to even an atom of effacement or affirmation as belonging to other than Him or coming from other than Him.

It is said the master is he who is verified in His (s) existence and effaced in witnessing Him, so the One who stands in for him is other than him and the One who acts on his account is other than him.

It is said the master is he who is not affected by the different vicissitudes of fortunes.

It is said the master is he who is not disturbed by tribulation or excited by blessing.<sup>642</sup> His condition is the same in different events.

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<sup>640</sup> Al-Qushayrī is referring to the fact that the adjectival ending *-ānī* is an intensifier.

<sup>641</sup> *Bi’illāh* is added here on the basis of MS K117, f. 38a.

<sup>642</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f. 38a here: *lā tastaqirruhu mihna wa lā yahuzzuhu ni‘ma*.

It is said the master is he who is not affected by the appearance (*wurūd*) of any incoming (*wārid*) to him.<sup>643</sup> The one who is made to speak by a soft heart, or is influenced by the unwelcome elements of an affair, or finds imperfection in fearsome aspects of an event is not a master.

It is said the master is he who is unconcerned in his heart and innermost self with any events, and who does not neglect anything in the law in what he does.

***By virtue of what you know of the book and in what you study*** of My continuous beneficence to you and the doubling of My blessing for you.

***[3:80] He would never order you to take the angels and the prophets as lords. Would He order you to disbelieve, after you have submitted?***

i.e., do not attribute to them so much as an atom in establishing good and evil.

It is said He informs you of the limited definition of human nature (*ḥadd al-bashariyya*) and the reality of lordship (*ḥaqq al-rubūbiyya*).

It is said He orders you to respect them with regards to the command and the law but to disdain the worth of created things in comparison to lordship. ***Would He order you to disbelieve, after you have submitted?***: Would He order you to affirm created things after bearing witness to the Real?

It is said: Would He order you to look to outward forms (*ashkāl*) and to attribute events to likenesses (*amthāl*) after the lights of unity (*tawḥīd*) have appeared in your innermost selves and after the suns of withdrawal from created things (*tafrīd*) have arisen in your hearts?<sup>644</sup>

***[3:81] And when God made a covenant with the prophets...***

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<sup>643</sup> In the section 'The incoming' (*al-wārid*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī explains that this can be something verbal or nonverbal that comes to one from God or from knowledge (Vol. 1, p. 245; Knysht translation p. 108).

<sup>644</sup> Note the rhyming pattern.

God made a covenant concerning Muḥammad (s) with all the [other] prophets (‘a), just as He made a covenant with them confirming His (s) lordship. This is the utmost honoring of the Messenger (s) since He connected his name with His own, and affirmed his worth just as He affirmed His own. So [Muḥammad] is singular in rank among all people. Then he facilitated the means for all in knowledge of His majesty through the miracles that appeared to him.

[3:82] *Then whoever turns his back after that, they are the wicked.*

The allusion in it is to whoever has abandoned his way (*sunna*) or has wandered from the following of his path (*ṭarīqa*) after the appearance of his evidence and the clarity of his miracle.<sup>645</sup> They are those whose condition has become foul. Abhorrence became their due because of their denial and the loss of their relationship to the divine solicitude.

[3:83] *What! Do they desire other than God’s religion, when to Him has submitted, whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willing, or unwillingly...*

One who pays attention to what is not real or looks to what is other than Him in conceptualizing divinity<sup>646</sup> is like one who sees a mirage he thinks is water but when he comes to it, he finds only dust. The errors of suppositions are disjointed and vague; those who descend into them have entered a desolate wadi.

*To Him has submitted, whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly* because of the lights of divine self-disclosure coming down continually to their innermost selves<sup>647</sup> *or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned* because of the carrying out of the divine decree forcibly upon them.

[3:84] *Say: ‘We believe in God, and that which has been revealed to us, and that which has been revealed to Abraham and Ismael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes; and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no division between any of them; and to Him we submit’.*

*We believe in God*, not our lower selves, nor our strength or our power. We believe in *that which has been revealed to us* through God and *we make no division between any of them*.

<sup>645</sup> Presumably, the referent of the possessive pronoun ‘his’ throughout this sentence is Muḥammad.

<sup>646</sup> The word ‘divinity’ (*ulūhiyya*) from MS K117, f. 38a makes more sense here than the word *ahliyya* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>647</sup> This bit of commentary occurs in MS K117, f. 38b but not in the Basyūnī edition.

This is through God (s), not through our own strength, choice, effort or acquisition. If He had not taught us what we know and do not know, how would we come to know that?

**[3:85] *Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers.***

Those who make their way without being extinguished under the flow of His decree – their feet slip in the bottomless ravine of errors.

It is said the one who seeks to gain favor with Him without clinging to [Islam], his loss is greater than his gain.

It is said those who are not annihilated from witnessing everything do not attain to the One through whom everything exists.

It is said whoever does not walk under the banner of Muṣṭafā (s),<sup>648</sup> the one who is exalted in his rank, sublime in his attributes – nothing, not so much as an atom will be accepted from him.

**[3:86] *How shall God guide a people who have disbelieved after their belief, and bore witness that the Messenger is true...***

Those whom He distanced from deserving communion in His prior decree – how should He draw them near to Him on the carpet of service through His favor now?

It is said those whom He made far removed in the pre-eternal decree – how should He bring them close to sincerity in practice? God is victorious over His affair.

**[3:87] *Those – their requital is that there shall rest on them the curse of God and of the angels and of men altogether.***

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<sup>648</sup> Muṣṭafā is a epithet for Muḥammad and means ‘the chosen one’.

Those – their state in the end is what it already was from His decree in the beginning of their affair. The beginning for them is fate's rejection, then the turning away from service, and then their end is the final outcome of banishment and humiliation.

**[3:88] *Abiding therein, the chastisement shall not be lightened for them and they shall not be reprieved.***

Abiding in that humiliation, the punishment will not abate for even a moment for them, nor will the separation be lightened for them for even an hour.

**[3:89] *But those who repent thereafter, and make amends, then truly God is forgiving, Merciful.***

They are those whom mercy reaches. They were not really among that group in the past although people imagined them to be part of it.

**[3:90] *Surely those who disbelieve after they have believed, and then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted; those are the ones who go astray.***

The allusion in it is that those who return to the states of the people of habit after having traveled the way of desire (*ṭarīq al-irāda*). They preferred this world and following caprice (*hawā'*) over seeking the Real (*swt*), so they renounced the people of the path and became more and more lonely in their darknesses. ***Their repentance shall not be accepted; those are the ones who go astray*** [3:90] from the path of the Real and their faith shall not be accepted after the appearance of faithlessness. Their punishment is that, as the days pass, the estrangement of the heart from the path only increases for them, and they are not distressed by the clarity of state which has slipped away from them. If they had persevered, their repentance would have been accepted, but the Real (*s*) follows His way (*sunna*) with those who are listless on this path when they revert to habitual states (*aḥwāl al-āda*),<sup>649</sup> not feeling regret for the moments that have passed away from them. God Most High said: *And We shall confound their hearts and eyes; just as they did not believe in it the first time* [6:110]. The apostate from Islam is a more powerful enemy to Muslims than the regular disbeliever. Likewise, the one who reverts from this path is more powerful in rejecting it and more oppositional to its people than those who were always alien to it.

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<sup>649</sup> The word *aḥwāl* from MS K117, f. 38b is preferable here to the word *uṣūl* in the Basyūnī edition.

[3:91] *Surely those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving, the whole earth full of gold shall not be accepted from any one of them if he would ransom himself thereby; for them awaits a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers.*

The allusion in it is to the one who dies after becoming listless. Even if he had a beautiful beginning, he will not be gathered in the Hereafter with the people of this story (*ahl hādhi'l-qīṣṣa*). Even if a thousand of those with mystical knowledge were to intercede for him, the perfection of the ruse with him is that he will encounter something like himself among others in the Hereafter, so that his acquaintances among the people of mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) will think that it is him, but it will not occur to anyone that he should intercede for him.

[3:92] *You will not attain piety (birr) until you expend of what you love; and whatever thing you expend, God knows of it.*

When it is piety<sup>650</sup> that is sought, He has mentioned [the word] 'of' (*min*) regarding it, and it is [the particle of speech] for dividing into portions, and so He said: *of what you love*. Whoever desires piety (*birr*) should expend some portion of what he loves, while whoever desires the One who is All-Benign (*al-bārr*)<sup>651</sup> should expend everything he loves. Whoever expends of what he loves in this world will find what he seeks from the Real, Most High. Whoever is attached to the fortunes (*ḥuẓūẓ*) of the lower self (*nafs*) will not find fortune in nearness to his Lord.

It is said you will only attain piety by expending what you love. When you come to the One who is All-Benign (*al-bārr*) you will prefer him over your fortunes.

*And whatever thing you expend, God knows of it.* There are those who expend looking for reward and compensation, those who expend looking to defend themselves from affliction and tribulations,<sup>652</sup> and those who expend content with His knowing. One of them said:

*He wishes to walk in a weak way  
so that she might,  
when she hears of his suffering,*

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<sup>650</sup> The word *birr* is usually translated as 'piety' which includes devotion to God as well as kindly and gentle behavior towards others.

<sup>651</sup> Lane says this form is not used to describe God's attribute (1:176), but al-Qushayrī is clearly using it in this sense here and in the next paragraph.

<sup>652</sup> The translation follows 'tribulation' (*miḥan*) from MS K117, f. 39a over *ḥazan* in the Basyūnī edition.



*send a message to him.*

*He trembles because of what has become known*

*in seeking the sublime,*

*that his qualities might be mentioned*

*one day before Salma.*<sup>653</sup>

**[3:93-94] All food was lawful to the Children of Israel save what Israel forbade for himself before the Torah was revealed. Say: ‘Bring the Torah now, and recite it, if you are truthful’. \* Whoever invents falsehood against God after that, those are the evildoers.**

The original state of things is that He does not declare them permissible or prohibited so there is no ordinance regarding them. That is a liberality and kindness from the Real (*s*) until the point when a command or a law comes regarding it. Surely God (*s*) eased the decrees of religious obligation for the people of the end (*ahl al-nihāya*).<sup>654</sup> Their way is to adopt what is easiest in order to perfect what comes to them from the decrees of the hearts, and surely that which is upon their hearts in difficulties is harder on them. As for the people of the beginning (*ahl al-bidāya*), the affair is constrained for them in tasks and litanies, so their way is to adopt what is harder and more difficult so as to empty their hearts of notions.<sup>655</sup> Whoever thinks otherwise is in error.<sup>656</sup>

The allusion as well in this verse in His saying: **Whoever invents falsehood against God** is to the states of the people of false claims and errors. They absolve themselves and attribute to God (*s*) their false notions (*hawājīs*) but God is free of these. It is a rare servant who can distinguish between [good] incoming thoughts (*khawāṭir*) and false notions (*hawājīs*).

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<sup>653</sup> Muṣṭafā gives the first verse, which is not included in either the Basyūnī edition or in MS K117, f. 39a, but is needed to make any sense of the second verse cited in both. He states that the verses are attributed in somewhat different versions to Alī b. Bilāl and others (Muṣṭafā, no. 37, p. 100-1).

<sup>654</sup> I think this passage may mean that more advanced individuals on the path do not need to constrict themselves as much with litanies, etc. Rather, the difficulties that come to them are upon the heart. The novices, on the other hand, are trying to empty their hearts and they take on additional difficulties to do this.

<sup>655</sup> The word here translated as ‘notions’ is *ma’ānī*, which is usually given a positive meaning in al-Qushayrī in reference to meanings that come to the heart. Al-Basyūnī adds a footnote to the commentary on 3:36, saying that what is meant in this passage is those things to which the lower self inclines.

<sup>656</sup> The last three sentences in this paragraph duplicate sentences found in the commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:64 in the Basyūnī edition, but not in the MS K117.

[3:95] *Say: ‘God has spoken the truth, therefore follow the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf, and he was not an idolater’.*

The religion (*milla*) of Abraham was coming forth (*khurūj*) to God and submitting to His decree without holding back in any way. To affirm so much as an atom in considering events is idolatry (*shirk*), strictly speaking.

[3:96-97] *The first house established for the people was that at Bakka, a blessed place, and a guidance to all worlds. \* Therein are clear signs, the station of Abraham; and whoever enters it is in security. It is the duty of people towards God to make the pilgrimage to the House, if he is able to make his way there. As for the one who disbelieves, God is Independent of all worlds.*

The House is a stone and the worshiper is a clod of earth. The clod of earth has become connected to the stone, so the clay is with the stone and the One Who has always been (*man lam yazal*) is magnified and sanctified.

It is said the House is the object of circumambulation of the lower selves (*nufūs*) while the Real (s) is the object sought by hearts.

The House is remains and vestiges, which are only tracings and stones but

*These traces of ours*

*point to us.*

*So after we [are gone]*

*look to the traces.*<sup>657</sup>

It is said the House is stone but not all stone is alike. It is stone but for the hearts of the lovers it is a source of restlessness, and for the souls<sup>658</sup> of the poor (*fuqarā*) it is something to boast about. Indeed for the hearts of some people it is cooling and pleasant and for the hearts of others it is agitating and elevating.

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<sup>657</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse appears unattributed in *Amālī Yazīdī* (Muṣṭafā, no. 20, p. 62).

<sup>658</sup> The Arabic here is *akbād*, which literally means ‘livers’ or ‘innards’ but symbolically refers to the seat of emotions and passions. It is in this sense that the English word ‘souls’ is used here.

They are of different types [in what they see in the House]:

A house that is the place sought and visited by lovers. Before it one hears reports of them and witnesses their traces.<sup>659</sup> A house – whoever looks to it with the eye of separation (*tafriqa*), returns with a ruined innermost self (*sirr*). Whoever observes it with the eye of connection (*iḍāfa*) wins every approach (*taqrīb*) and affirmation (*ijāb*). As it is said:

*Truly houses,  
even when they are silent,  
have a pact with Our lovers  
since they stop at them.*<sup>660</sup>

A house – whoever visits it with his lower self (*nafs*) finds His kindnesses (*alṭāf*), and whoever visits it with his heart (*qalb*) finds His unveilings (*kushūfāt*).

It is said He said: *and purify My House* [2:125 and 22:26], attributing it to Himself. But here He said ***the first house established for the people***, and in this is a bit of an allusion to the source of gathering together (‘*ayn al-jam*’).

It was named ‘Bakka’ because of its being crowded with people.<sup>661</sup> Everyone vies with one another in rushing to it and they are crowded together in circumambulating around it, and they exert their utmost in the path to reach it.

The House has not addressed anyone out of desire since it was built. Nor has it welcomed anyone as a favorite, nor sent anyone a line in a letter. If the house was that which He created from stone, this is its description in majesty.<sup>662</sup> What then do you think of the One to Whom the House belongs? [The Prophet] (ṣ) said, reporting from Him (s), ‘Grandeur is My cloak and Majesty is My covering’.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> The pronouns in the Basyūnī and the MS K117, f. 39a differ.

<sup>660</sup> I was unable to locate this verse in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>661</sup> One of the possible derivations of the word ‘Bakka’ is said to be a verb meaning ‘to crowd around’ (*bakka*), as reported in al-Ṭabarī’s *tafsīr* (*Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, vol. 4, p. 9).

<sup>662</sup> In other words, the House has no human characteristics and yet it is much more than stone.

<sup>663</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān cites works of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Zubaydī, al-Haythamī, Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Bayhaqī as sources for this *ḥadīth*.

It is said that since the House has been ascribed to Him, you will not reach it from any side without crossing deserts and desolate regions. How can you hope to reach the Lord of the House in a leisurely manner without bearing hardships and leaving comforts behind?

It is said don't attach your heart to the *first house* established for you, but rather devote your innermost self (*sirr*) to the first Beloved Who chose you.

It is said 'What a difference between a servant who devotes himself to the *first house* established for him and a servant who keeps constant company with the first Mighty One to whom it belongs!'

It is said that the crowding of the poor (*fuqarā'*) by means of their aspirations around the House is not less than the crowding of those circumambulating by means of their feet. The rich visit the House and circumambulate by their feet while the poor (*fuqarā'*) stand back from it and circumambulate around it by their aspirations.

It is said the Ka'ba is the House of the Real (*s*) in stone and the heart is the House of the Real (*s*) in the innermost self. Their speaker said:

*I am not*

*among the group of lovers if*

*I do not make the heart*

*His house and station.*

*And my circumambulation*

*is the circling of the innermost self in it.*

*It is my pillar*

*when I desire to touch [the stone].*<sup>664</sup>

The subtleties (*laṭā'if*) circumambulate the hearts of those who have mystical knowledge (*'arīfūn*). The realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) are secluded in the hearts of those who declare His Unity

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<sup>664</sup> 'To touch [the stone]': The word here is *istislām*, one meaning of which is to touch or reach the Black Stone of the Ka'ba. It also means 'surrender'. Muṣṭafā states that these verses are attributed to al-Shiblī, but with the word *sayr* instead of *sirr* in the second verse (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, pl 104-5).

(*muwahḥidūn*). The Ka‘ba is what the servant seeks in pilgrimage and the heart is what the Real seeks by His singling it out for proclaiming unity (*tawḥīd*) and ecstasy (*wajd*).

***A blessed place, and a guidance to all the worlds:*** Its blessings are connected to the kindnesses (*alṭāf*) and unveilings (*kushūfāt*). Whoever seeks it through his aspiration and makes it his quest – He guides such a one to the path of his rectitude.

***Therein are clear signs***, but these signs are not perceived with the eyes (*abṣar*) of heads but with the insights (*baṣā’ir*) of hearts. ***The station of Abraham***, in the outward sense, is the place where his feet left an imprint. In the allusion it is where the Friend (‘*a*’)<sup>665</sup> stood with his aspirations.

It is said that the nobility of the station of Abraham [by the Ka‘ba] is because it is the trace (*athar*) of [the footprints of] Abraham, and the trace of the Friend (‘*a*’) has a weighty significance.

***Whoever enters it is in security:*** It is said whoever enters the station of Abraham is in security (*āmin*), and the station of Abraham is surrender (*taslīm*). No free choice remains for one who submits his affairs to God and he is in security. The opposite of security is fear and fear exists only when what your desire is not obtained. When the servant has no desire or choice, how can he be described as having fear?

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It is said that the third person pronoun in His saying ***enters it*** refers to the House, so ‘whoever enters His house’ in truth ***is in security***. This is due to the fact that its being entered will be with the quality of refined behavior (*adab*). Without a doubt, the refined behavior for entering the House is to surrender affairs to the Lord of the House. Those who do not follow this surrendering (*taslīm*) are adversaries to [God’s] determination and decree (*taqdīr*). On the contrary, the refined behavior for entering the House can only be entering in surrender without resistance and strife, so it goes back to the aforementioned meaning.

If you make the allusion of the House to be the heart, then [it means that when] the authority (*sultān*) of reality (*ḥaqīqa*) enters someone’s heart, that person is secure from the inclinations of human nature (*bashariyya*) and the false notions (*hawājīs*) of the clamor of the lower self (*nafs*). Surely no danger can come to those who take refuge in the shade of the King.

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<sup>665</sup> ‘The Friend’ (*al-khalīl*), meaning Abraham.

It is said entering the House, in truth, can only be with your leaving yourself, for when you have left yourself, your entering the House will be appropriate and good. When you have left yourself, you will be secure.

It is said entering His house is not appropriate and good so long as you remain in your familiar territories and haunts, for one person cannot be in one circumstance in two places. It is more fitting that whoever enters the House of His Lord leave the familiar haunts of his lower self.

***It is the duty of people towards God to make the pilgrimage to the House, if he is able to make his way there:*** The stipulation for the rich person is to not hold back any of his wealth from the House, and the stipulation for the poor person (*faqīr*) is to not hold back a breath of his spirit in reaching His House.

It is said ‘being able’ is of different types: The one who *is able* by means of his lower self (*nafs*)<sup>666</sup> and his wealth is the sound and healthy. The one who *is able* [only] through others is the chronically ill and hungry. The third is one to whom most pay no heed. He *is able* by means of his Lord and this is the quality of every sincere and actualized one,<sup>667</sup> for his tribulations can only be born by Our<sup>668</sup> mounts.

It is said the pilgrimage to the House is an obligation for those who possess wealth, while the pilgrimage<sup>669</sup> to the Lord of the House is an obligation on the poor (*fuqurāʾ*) – an unalterable obligation. The path to the House might be blocked, but the path to the Lord of the House is never blocked and the poor person (*faqīr*) cannot be barred from the Lord of the House.

It is said the pilgrimage is the quest (*qaṣd*) to that which one magnifies, so there are those who seek to visit the House by means of their lower selves, and there are those who seek to witness the Lord of the House by means of their hearts. What a difference between one

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<sup>666</sup> Although al-Qushayrī usually uses the word *nafs* in a negative way, to refer to the lower self which is to be overcome, he occasionally uses the word as he does here, to refer to those human faculties which are called upon in performing acts of obedience.

<sup>667</sup> ‘Actualized one’ (*mutahḥaqqiq*) from MS K117, f. 39b is preferable to ‘deserving one’ (*mustahiqq*) in the Basyūnī edition, given al-Qushayrī’s theology on man’s actions.

<sup>668</sup> The Basyūnī edition has the pronominal suffix ‘Our’, while MS K117, f. ...has ‘His’. I have used the ‘Our’ version because it is consistent with other portions of al-Qushayrī’s commentary. What is interesting here is that al-Qushayrī follows the way in which pronouns and pronominal suffixes referring to God shift in the Qur’ānic text. Sometimes these shifts from ‘His’ to ‘Our’ occur within a single verse.

<sup>669</sup> The word ‘pilgrimage’ (*hajj*) does not occur in the Basyūnī edition, but has been filled in here from MS K117, f.39b.

pilgrimage and another! These remove their *iḥrām*<sup>670</sup> at the completion of the sacrifice and the performance of the acts fulfilling their obligation, while these remove their *iḥrām* at the witnessing of their Lord. As for those who seek through their lower selves, they enter into the consecrated state, leaving all that is designated as prohibited for the *iḥrām*, while those who seek by their hearts enter into the consecrated state leaving familiar things (*musākanāt*) and the witnessing of anything other and all humankind.

***As for the one who disbelieves, God is independent of all worlds:*** He assigned the mark of disbelief upon those who omit the pilgrimage to the house. Because of these words, the hearts of the scholars have fallen into the turmoil of rational interpretation (*ta`wīl*). Then He said: ***God is independent of all worlds.*** The threat is intensified by being made more specific.

It is said the way one makes pilgrimage to the House is based on the refined behaviors (*ādāb*) of the pilgrimage: When someone knots the *iḥrām* in his heart, he must let go of every knot blocking him from this way and undo every resolve that keeps him back from this realization. When he performs the ablution, he purifies himself from every bit of dirt from the traces of others (*aghyār*) with the water of embarrassment, then the water of shame, then the water of fidelity, and then the water of pure clarity. When he takes off his robe, he takes off every bit of clothing he has in blameworthy characteristics. When he calls out *labbayka*,<sup>671</sup> not one hair on his body should remain that has not already responded to God. When he reaches the place of standing, he stands with his heart and his innermost self where the Real has made him stand without choice in the station, and without opposition to the selecting. When he stands at `Arafāt, he has recognizes (*`arafa*) the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) and recognizes the right (*ḥaqq*) over his soul that belongs to Him Most High. He acknowledges (*yata`arrafa*) his lack of strength and power to God Most High and the Real (*s*) makes his grace and might known to him. When he reaches the Sacred Waymark (*al-mash`ar al-ḥarām*)<sup>672</sup> he remembers his Protector (*mawlā*) in forgetting himself – his remembrance of his Lord is not sound accompanied with remembrance of himself. When he reaches Minā he negates every request and desire, and every passion and fancy, from his heart. When he throws the pebbles, he throws every attachment in this world and the next. When he sacrifices, he sacrifices his own whims entirely, and approaches the Real (*s*) by [the sacrifice].

<sup>670</sup> *Iḥrām* is the consecrated state pilgrims enter into during the pilgrimage, wearing special garments and abstaining from all the things prohibited until the last obligatory rites of the pilgrimage are completed.

<sup>671</sup> 'Here I am, O God, here I am...' (*labbayka Llāhumma labbayk...*).

<sup>672</sup> A phrase referring to Muzdalifa, a place in between `Arafāt and Minā. It is mentioned in Qur'ānic verse 2:198: *You would not be at fault if you should seek bounty from your Lord; but when you press on from `Arafāt, then remember God at the Sacred Waymark; and remember Him as He has guided you, though previously you were astray.*

When he enters the *ḥaram*<sup>673</sup> he resolves to distance himself from every prohibited thing according to the law (*sharīʿa*) and allusion of true reality (*ḥaqīqa*).<sup>674</sup> When his glance falls on the House, he witness the Lord of the House in his heart, and when he circumambulates the House, his innermost secret walks about the dominion (*malakūt*).

When he runs between Ṣafā and Marwa, he purifies every bit of the turbidity of mortal nature (*bashariyya*) and human corruption. When he shaves his head, he cuts every attachment remaining to him. When he takes off the *iḥrām* from himself and his seeking the House of his Lord, he renews a new *iḥrām* in his heart. Just as he leaves the house of himself for the House of his Lord, he leaves the House of his lord for his Lord Most High.

Whoever completes his sacrifice acts only for the sake of his own soul. Whoever is lazy, **God is independent of all worlds**. [The Prophet] (ﷺ) said: **The pilgrim has matted hair and is dusty**. One who has not actualized the perfection of yielding and melting from his totality is not matted in hair or dusty.

**[3:98] Say: ‘O People of the Scripture, why do you disbelieve in God’s verses, when God is Witness of what you do?’**

The message in this verse is to confirm the pilgrimage prescribed for them. With respect to the true state of affairs (*ḥaqīqa*) and the subjugation (*qahr*), the pilgrimage is barred to them. They are called by the law and command, but banished by the decree and the subjugation.<sup>675</sup>

**[3:99] Say: ‘O People of the Scripture, why do you bar believers from God’s way, desiring to make it crooked, while you yourselves are witnesses. God is not heedless of what you do’.**

How can one who is barred himself bar another? Surely in this is a secret of the lordship.

**[3:100] O you who believe, if you obey a party of those who have been given the Scripture, they will turn you, after you have believed, into disbelievers.**

Estrangement is not just inevitable for the estranged, but also extends to anyone who becomes part of their circle. Whoever follows the enemy of God into this ruinous companionship will be cast to the [same] low level.

<sup>673</sup> The *ḥaram* refers to the area around the Ka’ba. The last stage of the pilgrimage is the return to this area and another circumambulation around the Ka’ba.

<sup>674</sup> Al-Qushayrī explains the interconnection between ‘The Law and True Reality’ (*al-sharīʿa wa’l-ḥaqīqa*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, p. 240; Knysh translation, p. 105).

<sup>675</sup> In other words, all mankind is called to these religious obligations yet non-Muslims are barred from Mecca.



[3:101] *How can you disbelieve while you have God's verses recited to you, and His Messenger is in your midst? Whoever holds fast to God, he is guided to a straight path.*

The shade of disbelief should not fall over one in whose heart the suns of mystical knowledge (*'irfān*) have risen, for surely when day comes, night slips away.

**Whoever holds fast to God:** The one who holds fast to God has only found the holding fast from God. How could those who have not been guided by God hold fast to God? The guidance from Him in the beginning causes your holding fast in the end. Your holding fast does not cause the guidance. The true state of affairs of the holding fast is sincerity in taking refuge in Him, persevering in the flight to Him, and holding on to the act of appealing for His help. Whoever has the covering of separation (*tafriqa*) removed from his innermost self realizes that there is not an atom that belongs to anything other than God and from it a *sīna*. The people who hold fast to Him are those who are held fast by Him. The master of the first and the last (s)<sup>676</sup> said: *I seek refuge in You from You.*<sup>677</sup>

Whoever holds fast in his soul without being effaced from his strength and power in his holding, polytheism (*shirk*) is his homeland but he does not notice.

[3:102] *O you who believe, fear God as He should be feared (ḥaqqā tuqātihi)*

The rightful due (*ḥaqq*) in God-fearing (*taqwa*) is that which conforms to the command, neither increased nor decreased by one's own ability. This is something that has been confirmed by statements regarding it. His command (*amr*) has two aspects, one of irreversible decree (*ḥatm*) and one of invitation (*nadb*).<sup>678</sup> Likewise, what is said regarding prohibition (*nahy*) has two parts, forbidding (*taḥrīm*) and abstaining (*tanzīh*). Included in all this is that the rightful due of fearing Him is firstly avoiding error, then avoiding negligence, then guarding (*tuqāt*) against every want, then cleansing every defect. When you have guarded against witnessing your fear of God (*taqwa*), after your having taking it on as a characteristic, then fear the rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of your fearing God (*taqwa*). The rightful due (*ḥaqq*) of fearing God (*taqwa*) is the rejection of disobedience and the removal of forgetfulness, the sustaining of contracts, the preservation of limits, the witnessing of the Deity, stripping off the mortal human properties (*aḥkām al-bashariyya*) and being extinguished under the flow of the decree (*ḥukm*) after avoiding every sin and injustice, and to feel disdain in seeking to gain access to Him by any bit of your obedience, disregarding the dispensing of His generosity,

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<sup>676</sup> i.e., Muḥammad.

<sup>677</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives no sources for this *ḥadīth*. In SDG, Chittick says 'versions occur in most collections (e.g., Muslim, Ṣalat 222; Tirmidhī, Da'awāt 75, 112)' (SDG, p. 437).

<sup>678</sup> i.e., what is obligatory and what is recommended.

and realizing that He does not accept anyone for cause (‘illa), nor does He reject anyone for cause.

[3:102 cont’d] *and do not die, except as Muslims.*

Do not let death (*wafāh*) overcome you except if you are in the condition of good faith (*wafā*).

[3:103] *And hold fast to God’s bond, together, and do not scatter; remember God’s grace upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together so that by His grace you became brothers; and you were upon the brink of a pit of fire; but He delivered you from it. So God makes clear to you His signs that you might be guided.*

The holding fast to His bond (*s*) is clinging to the traces of the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) – the noble one (‘*azīz*) (*ṣ*)<sup>679</sup> and this is by actualizing and staying connected to the Book and the Sunna.

It is rightly said that the elite (*khawāṣṣ*) are those spoken of in [the words] *and hold fast to God’s bond*, while it is said of the elect of the elect (*khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*) ‘and hold fast to God’. Whoever turns back from the presence of His signs (*sawāniḥ*) to his own choice and device, his own cognition and reasoning, his own knowledge and kind; and takes refuge in the shade of his own planning, seeking illumination by the light of his own intellect and cognition – he has the shade of divine solicitude (‘*ināya*) taken away from him and is left to his unfortunate state.

*And do not scatter*: Scattering or separation (*tafriqa*) is the most intense punishment, and it is the consort of polytheism (*shirk*).

*And remember God’s grace upon you when you were enemies*: They were enemies when they remained with their worldly concerns, turning towards the narrowness of mortal human nature, and competing with one another as befits the stinginess of lower selves.

*And He brought your hearts together* in deliverance from the captivity of engendered things (*mukawwanāt*) and drove back the dangers from their innermost selves. Then what they

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<sup>679</sup> i.e., Muḥammad.

sought became one thing together. If a thousand people were to be brought together in one pursuit, they would, in truth, be one.

***So that by his grace you became brothers:*** His grace, which is His protection of you as brothers in agreement in aim and aspiration, annihilated from the worldly concerns of the lower self and hidden to stinginess and avarice.

***And you were upon the brink of a pit of fire*** by your being held captive to the objects of your desire and bound by the shackles of your worldly concerns and whims.

***But He delivered you from it*** by the light of contentment and being extinguished in the flow of the decree, and this, in truth, is a mighty position and a weighty rank. Included in all this is abandoning reliance on what is from your own virtues and piety, or the intellect, discernment, learning, and understanding; and fleeing to God, may He be glorified and exalted above everything other than Him.

***[3:104] Let there be one community of you calling to good, and enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency; those are the successful.***

This is an allusion to people who remain with God, for God. No blame of any blamer reaches them, and no reliance on any cause ( *illa*) cuts them off from God. Their group comprehends the proofs of His command. They have restrained their lower selves<sup>680</sup> and have dedicated their lives in seeking to obtain His contentment. They work for God, have been faithful to the religion (*dīn*) of God, and call the created beings of God to God. So their commerce is profitable and their transaction is not a loss.

***[3:105] Be not as those who scattered and disputed after the clear proofs came to them, those there awaits a mighty chastisement.***

He made the marks of seeking appear in these people in the beginning but then branded them with the burning of separateness (*furqa*) in the end. They passed the night with the party of lovers and then awoke with the group of strangers.

***[3:106-107] The day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened. As for those whose faces are blackened, 'Did you disbelieve after you had believed? Then taste the***

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<sup>680</sup> This follows the word *anfus* from MS K117, f.40b rather than *anfās* from the Basyūnī edition.

*chastisement for what you disbelieved!’ \* But for those whose faces are whitened, they shall be in God’s mercy, abiding therein.*

The faces of the lords of pretensions (*da ‘āwā*) will be blackened while the faces of the companions of meaning (*ma ‘ānā*) will be whitened. The faces of the people of unveilings will be whitened through illumination in the future. The faces of the companions of the veil will be blackened through shame,<sup>681</sup> so that dust will cover them and darkness will overcome them.

It is said that whoever’s face is white today, his heart will be white in the future, and the one who is the opposite, his situation will be the reverse.

It is said that whoever turns away from created beings in the presence of His signs (*sawānīh*), his face will become white through the spirit of commitment (*tafwīd*).<sup>682</sup> Whoever’s heart is attached to what is other than God (*aghyār*) in the presence of wants and needs (*hawā’ij*), his heart will become black, his face in the dust of covetousness. As for those whose faces have become white, they will be in intimacy and ease (*rawḥ*). As for those whose faces have become blackened, they will be in tribulations and lamentation (*lawḥ*).

[3:108-109] *Those are the verses of God which We recite to you in truth, and God desires not any injustice for the worlds. \* To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, and to Him all matters are returned.*

We make our address to you continuous in all times, in all things small and large, a cultivation of the way of love (*widād*).

***And God desires not any injustice for the worlds:*** How could injustice be possible in what is attributed to Him by decree (*taqdīr*) and existence (*wujūd*), when all created beings are His creation and what has been determined for them is His determination (*ḥukm*)?

***To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth*** by way of possession (*milk*) ***and to Him all matters are returned*** by way of decree (*ḥukm*).

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<sup>681</sup> The translation follows the word ‘shame’ (*khajla*) from MS K117, f. 40b rather than *hijba* or *ḥajba* from the Basyūni edition.

<sup>682</sup> The way in which al-Qushayrī is uses the word ‘commitment’ (*tafwīd*) here may perhaps be best understood by the use of the verb *fawwada* in a passage of the Qur’ān (40:28-45) relating the story of a believer amongst Pharaoh’s people. In Qur’ānic verse 40:44, the words *I commit my affair to God* are attributed to this believer.

[3:110] *You are the best community brought forth to men, enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency, and believing in God.*

Because Muṣṭafa (ṣ)<sup>683</sup> is the most honored of the prophets, his community is the best of communities. Because they are the best of communities, they are the most honored of communities. Because they are the most honored of communities, they are the most desiring (*ashwāq*) of communities. Because they are the most desiring of communities, their lives are the shortest of lives.<sup>684</sup> He created them as the last of created beings so that their sojourn on<sup>685</sup> the earth would not be long. Their goodness has been obtained not by the abundance of their prayers and devotional acts, but by the increase in His drawing them near<sup>686</sup> and selecting them. Surely the standing of the earlier ones at the door has been long, but when the permission comes to enter, the later ones will go first.

*How many reach out*

*to connect to us*

*[yet] their palms receive*

*no share.*<sup>687</sup>

***Enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency:*** Decency is service to the Real and indecency is keeping company with the lower self (*nafs*). Decency is to prefer what is due to the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) and indecency is to choose the worldly portion of the lower self. Decency is what brings you close to Him and indecency is what veils you from Him. What is binding in the command to decency is that you be characterized by decency and what is required in forbidding indecency is to be adverse to indecency.

[3:110 cont'd] *Had the people of the Scripture believed, it would have been better for them; some of them are believers; but most of them are wicked.*

If all had been included under Our command, they would have attained true glory in this world and the Hereafter, but they were kept away from acceptance in the choice already made, so most of them became marked by polytheism (*shirk*).

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<sup>683</sup> Muṣṭafā is an epithet for Muḥammad and means 'the chosen one'.

<sup>684</sup> Presumably, al-Qushayrī means here that this community is the most desirous of death. See his commentary on Qur'anic verse 2:94.

<sup>685</sup> The preposition here is *taḥta*, which means 'under' but the context would seem to call for 'on'.

<sup>686</sup> The wording here follows the MS K117, f. 41a: *bi-ziyādat iqbālihi 'alayhim*.

<sup>687</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Al-'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf as well as Ibn Mu'tazz (Muṣṭafā no. 18, pgs. 28-9).

***[3:111] They will not harm you, except a little hurt; and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs to you, then they will not be helped.***

The Real (*swt*) does not give His enemies mastery over His friends except to the degree that their fleeing to God is sincere. Therefore the truth of their fleeing (*fīrār*) is more valuable to Him than their remaining (*qarār*). If [the enemies] are arrogant to the friends by their own reckoning, the circumstance will be reversed against them in lowliness and degradation.

***[3:112] Abasement shall be cast upon them, wherever they are found, save a rope of God, and a rope of the people; they have incurred with anger from God, and poverty shall be cast upon them; that because they disbelieved in God's signs, and slew the prophets without right; that because they disobeyed and used to transgress.***

The sign of being exiled cannot be hidden, the mark of distance cannot be concealed, and the evidence of being cut off cannot be veiled. They are in the lowliness of banishment and the abasement of rejection. Those who can see learn from them, while those among the disbelievers and the wicked are deceived by them.

***[3:113-114) Yet they are not all alike; some of the People of the Scripture are a community upright, who recite God's verses in the watches of the night, prostrating themselves. \* They believe in God and in the Last Day, enjoining decency and forbidding indecency, vying with one another in good works; those are of the righteous.***

Just as the difference between light and darkness is one of contradiction, it has likewise been established that the states of friends and the states of enemies are mutually exclusive. How can illumination and darkness, certainty and suspicion, communion and separation, distance and intimacy, devotion on the carpet and turning from the door, being characterized by friendship and turning away from fidelity be considered equal? How could the two possibly meet? How could they be compatible or equal?

***[3:115] And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and God knows the God-fearing.***

One who is intent (*qāṣid*) shall not be debarred from His door; one who does business shall not suffer loss on His account; one who desires companionship shall not be lonely with Him; and one who is seeking shall not be held contemptible before Him.

**[3:116] *As for the disbelievers, their riches shall not avail them, neither their children, against God; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein.***

There is no exchange for them in the situation, no substitute for them in the final outcome. They are at loss in the here and now and in the future will be in separation and exile, affliction and hurt, punishment and rejection.<sup>688</sup>

*She changed and we changed.*

*Alas to anyone who*

*has sought but did not find a*

*replacement to make him forget.*<sup>689</sup>

**[3:117] *The likeness of what they expend in the life of this world is as the likeness of a wind wherein is a blast that smote the tillage of a people who have wronged themselves and destroyed it. God did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.***

They found no inheritance for what they expended for other than God except one affliction after another. They obtained nothing from their calculations except layers of tribulations. That is the recompense of those who are averse and turn away.

**[3:118] *O you who believe, do not take as intimates anyone apart from yourselves; such men spare nothing to ruin you; they would love for you to suffer. Hatred is revealed by their mouths; and what their breasts conceal is yet greater. Now We have made clear to you the signs; if you understand.***

To trust in the adversary, after the difficulties have been made clear, is to undermine the situation in a place where the deception of the enemy cannot reach. The Real (s) advised the Muslims to be wary of the opposition, to declare themselves free of anyone other than Him, and to continually persist in their devotion to the Real (s) in the heart and innermost self. He stated that the opponents to the Messenger (s) among the people were not unexpected to them

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<sup>688</sup> The translation follows the wording in MS K117, f.41a here.

<sup>689</sup> There is an error in Basyūnī which Muṣṭafā corrects to *yaslu*. The MS K117, f.41a has *yuslī* here. Muṣṭafā states that the correct version of the verse is attributed to Al-Mustazhir and reads: *You changed and we changed, and we caused the loss. Anyone who seeks will not find a substitute for us* (no. 14, p. 47). Al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:10.

from the beginning. How could it not be when he (ﷺ) was the locus of acceptance and they were the locus of opposition? How can night be combined with day?

**[3:119] *Lo, there you are, you love them, but they love you not; you believe in the Book, all of it, and when they meet you they say, ‘We believe’, but when they are alone, they bite at you their fingertips, in rage.***

Your hearts, in the matter of your magnanimity, are free of impurities so sympathy predominates in you for them. But they, in their ferocious recalcitrance and antagonism, deceive you in what they are capable of doing. Because of their savageness you will not receive a drop of anything from them but their rage, so free your heart of them, O Muhammad.

**[3:119 cont’d] *Say: ‘Perish in your rage. God knows what is in the breasts’.***

Leave them alone in suffering the rage we have caused to enter them, and be relaxed in your hearts from what has happened to them, for God is nearer to His servants; He bestows what He will on whom He will.

**[3:120] *If good fortunate befalls you, it is evil for them; but if evil befalls you, they rejoice thereat. Yet if you endure and fear, their guile will not hurt you at all; God encompasses what they do.***

The allusion in this verse is to those who abandon the path of spiritual desire (*irāda*), returning to the states of the people of habit (*ahl al-‘āda*). They are not happy to see an aspirant (*murīd*) have a realization (*naḥādh*); rather they are glad when they see listlessness in a seeker (*qāṣid*). God in His favor and grace perfects His light for the people of His solicitude and He lets the evildoers stray from His path in the punishment of their distance. He is not concerned with what comes to them.

**[3:121] *And when you went forth at dawn from your family to assign the believers their places for battle, and God hears, knows.***

He put [the Prophet] (ﷺ) in charge of assigning the places for battle, delegating him by His command. Then he made manifest in the matter the hidden things of His secret. The axis [of the action] revolved upon His decree and His deliberative power, and the lesson learned (*i tibār*) was by what He brought about and chose.



**[3:122] *When two parties of you were about to lose heart; and God was their Protector, and let the believers rely on God.***

He brings forth everyone in the bodice of free choice, as if the command was theirs in their negating and affirming, their acting and abstaining from action. In truth, they are only turned about by the agency of (His) grasp and the turning of (His) deliberative power.

**[3:123] *God already gave you victory at Badr, when you were contemptible. So fear God, in order that you might be thankful.***

The reminder of favors granted in the past is an opening to the door of supplication in asking for similar things in the future.

**[3:124-5] *When you were saying to the believers, ‘Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down? \* Yea, if you are patient and fear, and they come against you instantly, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels accoutred’.***

The tranquility sent by the Real (s) to the heart of Muṣṭafā (s) was from God (s), without intermediary, while the strengthening of the hearts of the believers was through the Messenger (s). If not for what remained in them, he would not have replied to them, telling of the help in sending the angel (*malak*). Why tell of the angel when the affair is entirely in the hand of the King (*malik*)?

**[3:126] *What God ordained was only as a good tiding to you and that your hearts might be at peace. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise.***

God (s) enacts His practice (*sunna*) with His friends in such a way that, when their intentions become weak, their spiritual desire (*irāda*) low, or their hearts are on the verge of some listlessness; He shows them kindnesses and all kinds of special gifts (*karāmāt*) which strengthen the means for obtaining their mystical knowledge (*irfān*) and reinforce the realities of their certainty. According to this practice, He sent down this address, and then separated their hearts and innermost selves from anything other than Him entirely, and He said: ***Victory comes only from God.***

[3:127] *And that He might cut off a party of the disbelievers, or suppress them, so that they fall back, frustrated.*

God does not let enemies gloat over the misfortunes of His friends. Even if the believer is struck by a catastrophic defeat, there is no doubt that God will cause His enemy to suffer dissension and punishment.

[3:128-129] *No part of the command is yours [Muḥammad], whether He relents to them or chastises them; for they are indeed evildoers. \* To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; He forgives whom He wills and chastises whom He wills. And God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

The Deity is the One to Whom belongs the command and prohibition. Because there no counterpart to him in divinity, [the Prophet] (ﷺ) has no part in the command and prohibition.

It is said that in what He taught him and told him, He divested [the Prophet] of everything else and every share or claim since He stated that no part of the command was his. If no part of the command is permitted for the lord of the first and the last, then how can there be any part of the command for the one whose rank is lower in station?

It is said He takes for Himself alone the secret<sup>690</sup> of His servants in His decree, so He said: 'I am the One Who relents to whom I will among My servants and I punish whom I will. What happens in the end is hidden from you, O Muḥammad, and you are not aware of My secret regarding them'.

It is said He raised [the Prophet] up in one moment to a station in which He said: *and you threw not when you threw, but God threw* [8:17]. [The Prophet] threw a handful of earth and hit all the faces. But in another moment He said to him: *No part of the command is yours* [3:128], then added in explanation: *To God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth* [3:129]. Therefore the right of possession is His right of possession, the command is His command, and the decree is His decree. He punishes whom He wills and brings closer whom He wills. He guides whom He wills and misguides whom He wills.

[3:130-131] *O you who believe, do not exact usury, twofold and severalfold. And fear God, so that you may prosper. \* And fear the Fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers.*

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<sup>690</sup> The word 'secret' (*sirr*) is taken here from MS K117, f.41b.

He has prohibited usury for His servants. Among this is the loaning of one thing, demanding twice as much in return, and asking from you seven hundred times its amount, ad infinitum. The allusion in it is that magnanimity does not suit mankind but rather is an attribute of the Real (s).

***And fear the Fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers:*** According to the evidence of these words, the believer will not be chastised by it. If he is chastised by it for a time, he will not abide in it.

***[3:132] And obey God and the Messenger, so that you may find mercy.***

He linked obedience to the Messenger (s) to obedience to Himself. This was to honor [the Prophet's] worth, and to make things easier for the community by restoring them to the company of an individual from amongst themselves. Surely, being with one's own kind is more reassuring.

***[3:133-134] And vie with one another hastening to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a garden as wide as the heavens and the earth that has been prepared for those who fear. \* Who expend in prosperity and adversity, and restrain their rage, and pardon their fellow-men; and God loves those who are virtuous.***

The meaning here is 'vie one another in acting in ways that will bring about forgiveness for you'. Hearts were tormented, imagining that that was a difficult matter, so [the Prophet] (s) said: **Remorse is repentance**. Repentance brings about forgiveness because the one who disobeys is the one who is in need of forgiveness.

The people who vie with one another are of several types. Those who are worshippers vie with one another by their feet in acts of obedience. Those who have mystical knowledge ('*ārifūn*) vie one another by their aspirations in acts of drawing near. Those who are disobedient vie one another by their remorse in choking on their grief. Whoever vies with others by his feet [in acts of obedience] finds His recompense. Whoever vies with others by his aspirations finds His nearness. Whoever vies with others by his remorse finds His mercy.

When He mentioned the garden, He described it by the vastness of its width, and in that there is information about its height because the height is comparable to the width. But when He mentioned forgiveness, he did not mention height or width, so some people have said that forgiveness is from the qualities of the Essence and is part of the meaning of mercy. According to this (way of thinking), His forgiveness is His decision (*ḥukm*) in passing over

[the punishment] of the servant. It is His Speech (*kalām*), and the quality of the Essence is too holy for size and width. [On the other hand], those who say His forgiveness belongs with the Attributes of His acting say that because of the abundance of sins, He did not describe ultimate forgiveness, which would indicate His inclusion of all sins.

***Who expend in prosperity and adversity:*** They do not hoard anything from God and prefer Him to all things. They expend their bodies in acts of obedience and all kinds of litanies and effort; their wealth in the spreading of good things and striving for acts of drawing near by different kinds of alms; their hearts in seeking and then continual observation; their spirits according to the purity of their objects of love and the fulfillment of the totality of states; and their innermost selves in witnessings in all moments, waiting for allusions to the things sought, exerting their utmost in hastening to the subtlety of things sought.<sup>691</sup>

***And restrain their rage:*** The pass over [the faults] of people because they regard them with the eye of kinship. Some people are forbearing with others, having come to know their sin and viewing them with the eye of superiority. Others restrain their rage in recognition that the Real (*s*) knows what they endure and so bearing the burden becomes easy for them. Others have passed away from the mortal human properties (*aḥkām al-bashariyya*) and have found the purest comforts<sup>692</sup> in abasement (*dhull*) because their lower selves have fallen away and have been annihilated. Others see not even an atom of anything other [than God] in creation and performance, since they know that the One Who creates is God. Therefore their disputes and quarrels with anything other than God have disappeared, for when they have singled out Him alone as the cause of origination, they yield to His decree and with Him they see no other way other than submission to it. The Real (*s*) has bestowed upon them the coolness of contentment (*riḍā`*) and they stand for Him in the condition of harmony.

***And pardon their fellow men:*** They see it as an obligation on themselves, not a favor from them to their fellow men. Their speaker said:

*Many have thrown stones of harm*

*for my sake.*

*I have not found any escape*

*except compassion for them.*<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Basyūnī changes the second repetition of ‘things sought’ (*muṭālabāt*) to *muṭāla`āt*, thinking there was a copyist error. But I have left it in the translation since the repetition also occurs in MS K117, f.42a.

<sup>692</sup> The word ‘comforts’ (*rāḥāt*) from MS K117, f.42a has been preferred here over *darajāt* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>693</sup> Muṣṭafā adds another verse: *It may be that God will show me the most oppressive of people and draw me near to Him*. He states that the verses are attributed to Bahlūl b. ‘Amr (Muṣṭafā no. 2, p. 120).

**God loves those who are virtuous:** Virtuousness is that you worship God as if you see Him, and this is the right conduct with the Real. As for right conduct with people, virtuousness is that you give up your right (*haqq*) entirely, to the amount one deserves; that you meet a person half way; and that you do not hold any favors against him in that.

[3:135-136] ***And who when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember God, and pray forgiveness for their sins – and who shall forgive sins but God? – and who do not persist in what they did, knowing. \* Those – their requital is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; excellent is the wage of those workers!***

God Most High revealed to Moses (‘a): Say to those who do wrong, ‘Until such time as they do not remember Me, I have obliged Myself to remember those who remember Me and My remembrance of those who do wrong is the curse’.<sup>694</sup> But He said to those who do wrong in this community: ***or wrong themselves, remember God***, then He says in the last part of the verse: ***and who shall forgive sins but God?***

It is said one’s indecency is according to one’s state and station, as is true of one’s wrong doing. The transgressions that occur in the minds of the most respected people are like their being acted out by others. Their speaker said:

*You are my eye.*

*My eye has no right*

*to lower its eyelids*

*against the dust in the air.*<sup>695</sup>

The crime (*jurm*) on the carpet is not like the sin (*dhanb*) at the door.

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<sup>694</sup> One of the occasions of revelation for this verse, cited by al-Wāḥidī in his *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, describes a concern the Companions of the Prophet brought to the Prophet. They wondered if the Children of Israel were more favored by God than them, because they were given specific and individual instructions on how expiate their sins. When this verse was revealed, Muḥammad asked them whether they had not been given something better (for a full English translation, see al-Wāḥidī in the Tafsir section of [www.altafsir.com](http://www.altafsir.com)).

<sup>695</sup> Both Basyūnī and Muṣṭafā identify this verse as that of Ibn Rūmī (Muṣṭafā, no. 3, p.22).

It is said they commit an indecency by relying on their (own) actions, or they wrong themselves by regarding their states, so they seek forgiveness for their sins by declaring themselves free from their [own] movements and lack of movements, knowing from them that there is no means to Him except by Him. He has purified them of the wrong doings of their selves. Looking to states and actions when realities appear is wrong doing. One whom God has purified by the light of solicitude is protected from entanglement in the delusions of mankind.

*Those – their requital is forgiveness from their Lord* in returning them to witnessing the Lordship and what was already theirs in the best possible outcome and fate.

*And Gardens beneath which rivers flow* in the future in Paradise and in the here in now in the happiness of whispered conversations<sup>696</sup> and the fullness of intimacy.

[3:137-138] *Ways of life have passed away before you; so travel in the land and behold how was the end of those who denied. \* This is an exposition for mankind, and a guidance, and an admonition for such as are God-fearing.*

It means take a lesson from those who came before. Consider how We dealt with those who come successively, and how We took revenge on those who followed one after the other.

*This is an exposition for mankind:* an exposition to some people through rational proofs, to others through the unveilings to hearts, and to others through the self-disclosure of the Real in the innermost selves.

[3:139] *Faint not, neither grieve, for you shall prevail if you are believers.*

It means when you support or launch an attack for God, you should not be afraid of anything other than God. Nor should you grieve or become weak, for surely victory is from God and the One who prevails is God. Nothing is equal to God, not so much as an atom or a *sīna* from them.

His words *if you are believers*: i.e., fear of anything other than God should not cast its shadow over the believer.

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<sup>696</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.42b in *munājāt* rather than *mubāḥāt* from the Basyūnī edition.

[3:140] *If a wound touches you, a like wound already has touched the other people. Such days We deal out in turn among mankind, and that God may know those who believe; and that He may take witnesses from among you, and God loves not the evildoers.*

If a difficulty has come to you for Our sake, they have faced something similar before you. They have been granted something like what you have been granted. Those who are patient among them will be victorious. Those who complain in facing what comes will lose. Days come in turns and the vicissitudes of life are ever changing, and nothing is hidden from the Real.

[3:141] *And that God may prove the believers, and efface the disbelievers.*

The tests of the Unseen are a kind of smelting<sup>697</sup> for the servant. Through different stages, He purifies him from faults so that he becomes like pure gold without any dross. In this way, one becomes clear of defects and purified for God.

*And efface the disbelievers* in the wadis of dispersion (*tafriqa*). *As for the scum, it passes away as dross* [13:17].<sup>698</sup>

[3:142] *Or did you suppose that you should enter Paradise without God knowing, who among you have struggled and who are patient.*

The wish of those who think they can arrive at a greatly esteemed place without enduring hardships cast them into the abyss of destruction. On the other hand, those who recognize the value of what it sought will have the exertion of their pains made easy for them:

*Time is not generous*

*with its pleasures*

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<sup>697</sup> Basyūnī notes that the word from the original is *shabk*, which corresponds to MS K117, f.42b. The translation follows Basyūnī's decision that *sabk* must be the intended word. *Sabk* refers to the process of melting, refining and shaping metal and is used metaphorically to speak of the testing and refining of human character.

<sup>698</sup> Basyūnī suggests in a footnote that this verse may have been placed here in error and belongs in the previous paragraph to explain the word 'dross' (*khabath*). However, it occurs in this order as well in the MS K117, f.42b so I have left it here.

*for those who are reluctant  
to throw off restraints.<sup>699</sup>*

Their speaker said:

*When youth is on the lookout  
for the lightening of meanings (al-ma'ānā),  
the least valuable use of time  
is the pleasantries of sleep.<sup>700</sup>*

[3:143] *You were longing for death before you met it. Now you have seen it, looking on.*

Pangs of longing come after being patient in enduring difficulties but:

*When tears  
flow down cheeks  
The one who is crying is distinguished  
from the one who is only pretending.<sup>701</sup>*

[3:144] *Muhammad is only a messenger: messengers have passed away before him. Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn back on your heels. If any man should turn back on his heels, he will not harm God in any way, and God will requite those that are thankful.*

The messengers were stationed (*mawfūqūn*) where they were stationed, and they spoke of what they have been taught according to what they knew. When they were supported by the

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<sup>699</sup> Basyūnī identifies the verse as Abū Nuwās's, referring to his dispute with Muslim ibn al-Walid. I was unable to locate the verse in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>700</sup> Muṣṭafā gives two references attributing this verse to 'Alī Abū Ṭālib and one to Abū'l-Qāsim al-Sa'dī (Muṣṭafā, no. 20, p. 49).

<sup>701</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to Al-Mutanabbī (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p. 90-1). Al-Qushayrī cites the same verse in his commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:88.



lights of insights, they came to know the hidden things of the innermost self to the degree that they were given illumination (*ishrāq*) through the subtleties of allusion.<sup>702</sup>

**Why, if he should die or is slain, will you turn back on your heels:** When Muṣṭafā (ṣ)<sup>703</sup> passed away, the eyes of discernment of all went weak, except those of al-Ṣadīq (*ra*).<sup>704</sup> God aided him with the power of the Spirit of Peace (*sakīna*) and inspired him with the power of governorship (*al-tawallā*). [Abū Bakr] said, ‘Whoever worships Muhammad, Muhammad has died’.<sup>705</sup> All were subdued by the authority of his words because of what spread to them from the light of his state, just as the sun by its rising incorporates in its rays the lights of the stars. The capacities of the places where the rays of each star fall are then concealed within [the sun’s rays].

He said **Why, if he should die or is slain** because [the Prophet] (ṣ) was slain. [The Prophet] said: **The meal of Khaybar comes to me yet again, but this time it has cut my aorta.**<sup>706</sup>

[3:145] ***It is not for any soul to die, save by the leave of God, a prescribed term. And whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it; and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We will give him of it; and We will requite the thankful.***

Souls are confined [within a certain time period] without increase or decrease.

**And whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it:** For the righteous is the final outcome (*‘āqiba*) and for others is heedlessness (*ghafla*).

**And whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We will give it of it:** The reward of the Hereafter is first of all forgiveness (*ghufrān*), then the gardens (*jinān*), then beatitude (*riḍwān*).

**And We will requite the thankful:** The requital for thankfulness is thankfulness.

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<sup>702</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.42b here, as it makes more sense: *maknūnāt al-sirr bi-miqdār mā u‘tū min al-ishrāq bi-laṭā‘if al-talwīh*.

<sup>703</sup> i.e., Muḥammad

<sup>704</sup> i.e., Abū Bakr

<sup>705</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān states that this *ḥadīth* can be found in al-Bukhārī, Ibn Māja, and Ibn Ḥanbal.

<sup>706</sup> The translation for this paragraph follows MS K117, f.42b here because it is clearer. Al-Qushayrī is explaining the use of the word ‘slain’ in the Qur’ānic verse as referring to the assertion the Prophet Muhammad reportedly made on his death bed that his illness was caused by poisoned food he had been given to eat some years previously. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān states that the *ḥadīth* is cited in al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, and Ibn ‘Adī.

[3:146] *How many a prophet has been killed and with him thousands manifold [fought], but they fainted not in the face of what afflicted them in God's way; they neither weakened, nor did they humble themselves. And God loves the patient.*

Those who followed the course in fidelity, who stood fast with regard to purity, who did not withdraw from the path (*tarīq*), and who demanded realization of themselves, reproaching themselves by restriction and scrutiny – they found the love of the Real (s) as a legacy for their patience. The Real was what came after for them at the end of their affair, since they did not swerve from the required effort, or from the protection of the pact, and they submitted themselves utterly, abandoning the present world. Every one of them was constant and abiding in holding to the pact and staying true to the condition of service and love.

[3:147] *All that they said was, 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs and make firm our feet and help us against the unbelieving folk'.*

They recognized the realities of meaning (*ḥaqā'iq al-ma'nā*) and held their tongues from making any claims. Then they spoke seeking forgiveness and holding to an attitude of shyness, just as it has been said:

*He avoided misdeeds*

*and then even became afraid of them.*

*Instead it was as if his good deeds*

*were misdeeds.<sup>707</sup>*

[3:148] *And God gave them the reward of this world,*

The smallest part (*aqillu*) of that is satisfaction, then contentment, then living with Him, then intimacy in sitting between His hands, then the perfection of joy in meeting Him, then considering the innermost self insignificant (*istiqlāl*) in His existence.

[3:148 cont'd] *and the fairest reward of the Hereafter, and God loves the virtuous.*

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<sup>707</sup> Muṣṭafā states that the verse is attributed to Abū Tamām, who recited it in praise of al-Ma'mūn (Muṣṭafā, no. 7, p.105).

It means their entering the Garden, emancipated from [this world] and not being held captive by it.

It is said the reward of this world and the Hereafter is the absence (*ghayba*) from the two abodes in the vision of the Creator of them both.<sup>708</sup>

When He said: ***the reward of this world***, He said regarding the Hereafter: ***and the fairest reward of the Hereafter***, so it must be that the reward of the Hereafter is superior to the reward of this world since He has bestowed on it the description ***the fairest***. This superiority is [the Hereafter's] permanence, perfection and fruits; and that it cannot be adulterated by anything negating it, nor can harm occur in it.

[3:149-150] ***O you who believe, if you obey the disbelievers, they will make you turn back on your heels, and you will revert as losers. \* Nay, but God is your Protector, and He is the best of helpers.***

It means that if you obey the adversaries, they will pull you into their states and cast you into their darknesses. Nay, God is your Protector, your Helper, the One who aids you, Your Master, and the One who sets your affairs aright. ***And He is the best of helpers*** because He aids you against your lower selves, protecting you from their evil. Anyone other than Him adds to your afflictions when they help you because they aid your lower selves against you. ***And He is the best of helpers*** because anyone other than Him bestows a favor in helping you, while He rewards you for your asking for His help.

It is said that you need to give something to anyone from whom you have asked for help from your valued things, whether he has helped you or not. But when you ask Him (*s*) for help, He gives you every kindness, and takes no pleasure in not helping you.

[3:151] ***We will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers; for what they have associated with God that for which He has revealed no warrant; their abode shall be the Fire; evil is the abode of the evildoers.***

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<sup>708</sup> See al-Qushayrī's section on 'Absence and Presence (*al-ghayba wa'l-ḥudūr*) in his *Risāla*, where he explains that absence from created things corresponds to presence with the Real (vol. 1, pgs. 214-16; Knysh translation, pgs. 91-3).

God (s) designated our Prophet (s) to cast terror (*ruʿb*) from Him into the hearts of His enemies. [The Prophet] (ʿa) said: **I was helped by terror (*ruʿb*)**.<sup>709</sup> He also follows this way (*sunna*) with His friends. He puts fear (*hayba*) of them in hearts. Fear (*hayba*) and force (*qahr*) would hardly be right in hearts were it not from Him and used with those who follow falsehood, make false claims, and misrepresent.

**[3:152] *God has been true to His promise, when you slew them by His leave, until you lost heart, and quarreled over the command; and you disobeyed after he had shown you what you longed for.***<sup>710</sup>

The allusion in this verse is to the fact that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) raises His friends up (*aqāma*)<sup>711</sup> in the truth of His truth (*ḥaqq ḥaqqiḥi*) and restrains them<sup>712</sup> from attaining their worldly fortunes (*ḥuḏūḏ*). He (s) stands (*qāma*) as sufficient for them in every way. Whoever persists in the path of uprightness (*istiḳāma*) will not deviate from His boundary, and He will not deviate from His pact, for **God has been true to his promise** to them with beautiful and continuous sufficiency. But whoever falls away from uprightness<sup>713</sup> – even if only a step – stumbles in his walking, and his state and ability is destabilized to the extent of his offence. So whoever has been increased has been increased from Him, and whoever suffers decrease has suffered decrease from Him.

**[3:152 cont'd] *Some of you desired this world; and some of you desired the Hereafter. Then He turned you away from them, so that He might try you; yet now He has pardoned you, and God is Bounteous to the believers.***

The value of each person is his desire (*irāda*). So whoever's aspiration is for this world, his value is base and paltry like this world. Whoever's aspiration is for the Hereafter, his rank is a noble one. Whoever's aspiration is knowledge of the Lord (*rabbāniyya*), he is the master (*sayyid*) of his time.

<sup>709</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān states that this *ḥadīth* is cited in al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Haythamī and al-Hamīdī.

<sup>710</sup> In the Basyūnī edition, this part of Qur'ānic verse 3:152 is followed by a repetition of the paragraph that begins 'It is said that you need to give something to anyone...' above, in the commentary on 3:150. The repetition of this paragraph here appears to be an error and does not occur in MS K117, f.43a.

<sup>711</sup> Literally, 'causes them to stand up'.

<sup>712</sup> Literally, 'causes them to sit down'.

<sup>713</sup> In the 'Section on Uprightness' (*bāb al-istiḳāma*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī quotes Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Fūrak as saying the letter *sīn* in *istiḳāma* is the *sīn* of seeking (*talab*). This refers to the fact that the verbal noun *istiḳāma* is the tenth form of the verb *qāma*. The tenth form of verbs can refer to the seeking of something, so *istiḳāma* could be understood, as al-Qushayrī points out, as asking God to uphold one in declaring His unity, holding them steady in their commitments, and protecting themselves within the limits set by God (vol. 2, p.442; Knysh translation p. 219). The passage here, then, might be understood as referring to stumbling from this requesting, rather than stumbling in any particular task.

It is said that anyone who is purified of his desire reaches Him, and anyone who reaches Him draws near – by His kindness – to Him and is brought close in the locus of intimate friendship (*khuṣūṣiyya*) in His presence.

***Then He turned you away from them:*** The allusion in it is that He has turned some people away from Him and distracted them from Himself by what is other than Him. Others He turned from anything other, singling them out for Himself. He turned the ascetics away from this world, the worshippers from following whims, the aspirants (*murīdūn*) from lower desires (*al-munā*), and those who declare oneness from everything other [than Him].

[3:153-154] *When you were ascending, not turning around for anyone and the Messenger was calling you from your rear, so he rewarded you with grief for grief so that you might not grieve for what escaped you, neither for what befell you; and God is aware of what you do. \* Then He sent down upon you, after grief, security – a slumber overcoming a party of you, and a party whose own souls distressed them, thinking wrongly of God, thoughts of age of ignorance, saying, ‘Have we any part whatever in the affair?’ Say: ‘The affair belongs entirely to God’. They conceal within their hearts what they do not disclose to you, saying, ‘Had we had any part in the affair, we would not have been slain here’. Say: ‘Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom it had been appointed that they be slain would have sallied forth to the places where they were to lie’ that God might try what was in your breasts and that He might prove what was in your hearts; and God knows what is in the breasts.*

The allusion in this verse is to people for whom a period of weakness occurs. The calls of the Real (s) come from within and without,<sup>714</sup> so that it is as if the rocks in the streets and the bricks in the walls are crying out to such a one, ‘Don’t do it, O servant of God!’ But he is resolved upon his crooked way and settled in his error, refusing to acknowledge what he knows is more fitting and appropriate in his state. If he were to accomplish his wish and fulfill his aspiration, he would undoubtedly rein himself in and would hold back from galloping ahead, for he will obtain nothing but gasping breaths and continuous sorrows. The Real (s) has caused him to inherit only estrangement. Eventually, when he has been in this place of regret for a long time, the Real (s) will relieve him with His beautiful kindness and draw him near with His gracious affection. He will deliver him from the narrowness of his captivity and transfer him to the spaciousness of His pardon and favor. Many of these will reach the place of the most respected, and then they will stand by God for God when they have passed from the station and honor.<sup>715</sup> They will stand by God for God without waiting to be brought near and without regard for welcome.

<sup>714</sup> Literally, ‘from their souls and from all sides’.

<sup>715</sup> The Basyūnī edition is blank after ‘by God for God’ so the sentence has been completed with MS K117, f.43b: *hīna ‘adimū al-maḥām* (error for *maqām*?) *wa’l-akrām*.

***He sent down upon you, after grief, security – a slumber overcoming a party of you, and a party whose own souls distressed them, thinking wrongly of God, thoughts of age of ignorance:*** After the periods of their weakness, the people of realization and declaring unity reach the point where they declare the abandonment of their souls. They wash their hands clean of them and raise their hearts from them, so they might live by God for God without regard for any craving or want, following instead the creed of renunciation from everything. Upon Him they confirm the pact and substitute their concerns, leaving every share and worldly fortune. This is the quality of those to whom He sent down security.

As for the party ***whose own souls distressed them***, they remain in the lonely estrangement of their souls. The evil of what they hold on to on the path after their believing in it hastens their final outcome. God Most High said: *And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes; just as they did not believe in it the first time* [6:110].

The allusion in God Most High's words, ***'Have we any part whatever in the affair?'*** is to those who are confused in their affair, for there is no drawing near to what is correct for them in truth, nor turning away entirely. Their weakness is transferred to bad choices and they would give the best part, if their hearts had it, to their effort. They forget their Lord in both states so they do not perceive the decree of the Real (*s*). God Most High said: ***Say: 'The affair belongs entirely to God'*** : Anyone who knows that the originator is God has stripped himself of his free choice and states, like the stripping of hair from the catamite, and he has submitted his affairs to God entirely. The sign of the one who has actualized this is that he is relieved from the trouble of his self-management (*tadbīr*), and lives in the spaciousness of witnessing His decree (*taqdīr*).

***They conceal within themselves what they do not disclose to you:*** They have not been loyal to their convictions (*'aqā'id*). They have hidden what is contradictory to what they show outwardly, while publicizing something other than what they keep secret. They assign engendered things to causes (*asbāb*) which they have only imagined.

***Say: 'Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom it had been appointed that they be slain would have sallied for to the places where they were to lie'***: He has informed us that the decree cannot be pushed away, and fate cannot be resisted. Engendered things are predestined (*maḥtūm*) and God prevails over His affair.

***That God might try what was in your breasts:*** As for the people of realities, God Most High removes every harm and hindrance from their hearts, and claims their innermost selves for drawing near and intimacy. So their hearts become pure of defects and clear of attachments, singled out for the Real, detached from created things, freed from worldly concerns and the lower self, the effects of drawing near appearing to them, the beauty of divine governorship (*tawallī*) prevailing over them, and the lights of disclosure (*tajallī*) appearing in them.

**[3:155] Truly, those of you who turned away the day the two hosts encountered each other – truly, Satan made them slip through some of what they had earned; but God pardoned them; God is Forgiving, Forbearing.**

The allusion in this verse is to the states of those whose spiritual desire (*irāda*) became meager and their intentions (*niyyāt*) weak. Caprice (*hawā*) guided them and listlessness overwhelmed them. The counsel of counselors, the call of desires, and the whispers of satans met them face to face, and they put their trust in withdrawing. They preferred caprice to piety, and stayed back from [the fray] but were not pleased<sup>716</sup> with what they chose over it.

**[3:156] O you who believe, be not as the disbelievers, who say of their brothers, when they travel in the land, or are on raiding campaigns, ‘Had they been with us, they would not have died and would not have been slain’ – so that God may make that anguish in their hearts. For God gives life, and He gives death and God sees what you do.**

Whoever makes a habit of worrying about what is past and planning for his future and each new moment – the least of his punishment will be the constriction of his heart through disconcerting worries and the disappearance of the quality of life from his heart because of his forgetfulness and his saying ‘if only such and such’ or ‘maybe such and such’. The result of this kind of thinking is estrangement and grief, the constriction of the heart and separation.

**[3:157-158] And if you are slain in God’s way, or die, forgiveness from God and mercy are better than what they amass. \* And if you die or are slain, it is to God you shall be mustered.**

To sacrifice the spirit in God is better than life without God. Returning to God is better for one who knows God than staying behind with something other than God. Whatever the servant prefers over God is not blessed. If you want, there is this world and if you want, there is the final outcome.

***And if you die or are slain, it is to God you shall be mustered:*** When the destination is to God, the journey is pleasant. A journey such as this, when it comes to an end, is sweeter than honey because of its hardships!

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<sup>716</sup> Both the printed edition and the MS K117, f.43b have *lam yatahannaw* here.

[3:159] *It was by the mercy of God that you were lenient with them; had you been harsh and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from about you. So pardon them, and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter. And when you are resolved, rely on God; for God loves those who rely.*

He stripped [the Prophet] of his human attributes (*awṣāf al-bashariyya*), singling him out to be clothed from the attribute of lordship (*naʿt al-rubūbiyya*). He said that what shone upon him was from the lights of divine governorship (*tawallā*), not from the effects of meeting or encountering. If not for the fact that He had selected him for what He clothed him in, how could he have that quality?!

It is said that among the particular properties of His (s) mercy for [the Prophet] was that He gave him strength so that he kept company with them and had patience in conveying the message to them, despite what he used to bear in their disagreeing with the authority with which he was utterly engaged at every moment from the overwhelming power of the Real over him. If not for the divine strength the Real chose for him alone, how could he have had the power to keep company with them? When Moses (ʿa) was close to the covenant of hearing His word, don't you see how he was unable to remain patient in speaking with his brother, so he grabbed his head, pulling it toward him?

It is said if it were not for the fact that [the Prophet] (ṣ) saw them effaced in what came to them from the decrees of turning about (*taṣrīf*) and his realization that the originator of these [shifting events] was God, he would not have been able to keep company with them.

***Had you been harsh and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from about you:*** If you had given them to drink the pure drink of unity (*tawḥīd*), undiluted with their worldly concerns, they would have separated from you, wandering about, unable to stand still for even a moment. ***So pardon them*** for what may be their neglecting of your right and the respect due to you, and for what you come across in them in their negligence in serving Us and obeying Us. Rise up as an intercessor (*shafīʿ*) to Us on their behalf.

It is said ***So pardon them*** – you pardon them, since your decree (*ḥukm*) is Our decree and you do not forgive except when We have forgiven. Then [God] brought [the Prophet] back from this attribute, establishing him in the station of servanthood and shifting him to the state of separation (*tafriqa*), saying, ‘Then stop in the place of humility, praying humbly to Us in seeking forgiveness for them’. Such is His way (*sunna*) with His prophets (ʿa) and friends, returning them from gathering (*jamʿ*) to separation (*farq*) and from separation to gathering.



His words ***So pardon them*** are a gathering and His words ***and ask forgiveness for them*** are a separation.<sup>717</sup>

It is said, ***So pardon them*** and pay no attention to your own rights from them. Do not be content with [your pardon] without seeking forgiveness for them to complete the act of generosity. It was because of this that [the Prophet] used to say: **O God, guide my people since they do not know.**<sup>718</sup>

It is said what they neglected in your right is connected to two rights: your right and My right. So when *you* pardoned them, this decree was not sufficient; rather, if *I* do not give up *My* right from them, they merit punishment, for anyone whom He wishes as His enemy, his condition will not be restored until God forgives him for neglecting His command.

***And ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter:*** i.e. establish a place for them, since the one who has been pardoned feels shame in his breast and does not see for himself a noble position. When you consult with them, their dejection will be removed from them and you will have put their hearts at ease.

It is said there is a correlation in their states, for the one who has had his right neglected is commanded to pardon, and the one who has been the victim of another's sins is commanded to seek forgiveness for him, and the one who is to be obeyed without fail is commanded to consult with the other.

***And when you are resolved, rely on God:*** i.e., do not rely on the opinion of any created being but trust affairs to Me. I will release you from turning about in the grip of changing circumstances. The true sense of reliance (*tawakkul*) is witnessing the divine preordination (*taqdīr*) and the relief of hearts from the turbulence of self-direction (*tadbīr*).

***For God loves those who rely:*** He causes them to taste the coolness of [His] sufficiency in order to remove from them every fatigue<sup>719</sup> and hardship. He repays everyone with what they deserve, so He enriches some people for their reliance by His gift. Others He suffices for their reliance by the encounter with Him. Some people He makes content with the totality of their

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<sup>717</sup> Al-Qushayrī is distinguishing here between the state in which God acts through His servant and the state where the servant experiences his separateness from God and therefore makes supplication to Him. See the section on 'Gathering and Separation' (*al-jam' wa'l-farq*) in his *Risāla*, (vol. 1, pp. 207-8; Knysh translation pp. 87-88).

<sup>718</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān does not give any sources for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>719</sup> 'Fatigue' (*ta'ab*) follows MS K117, f.44a.

states so that they are satisfied with He alone remaining. They position themselves with Him, through Him and for Him according to the shifting hues<sup>720</sup> of His fate and decree.

**[3:160] *If God helps you, then none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, then who is there who can help you after Him? Therefore on God let the believers rely.***

His help to the believers is by granting success to the bodily forms (*ashbāh*), and then by granting realization to the spirits (*arwāh*).

It is said God helps you by supporting the outward aspects of things (*ẓawāhir*) and by guiding the innermost hearts (*sarā'ir*).

It is said the help will only be against the enemy and the worst enemy you have is the lower self (*nafs*) between your two sides. The help against the lower self is that its claims of strength will be routed by the guardians of His mercy until the armies of cravings scatter upon the attacks of the assemblies of combatants. The friendship of God will remain, purified from the doubts of the pretensions which are the qualities of being human, and the cravings and desires of the souls which are the effects of veiling and obstacles of separation.<sup>721</sup>

***If He forsakes you:*** The forsaking is the abandonment of those who are disobedient, for those whom He helps He holds back from pursuing the objectionable and those whom He forsakes He gives free rein and entrusts them to the evil of their free choice. Such a one's state comes apart in the torrents of cravings, so he wanders one way without shame and than another way without respect. Surely, when the Real releases someone and does not take him by the hand, and deserts him, there is no protector for him.

***Therefore on God let believers rely*** in finding security with the sincerity of supplication and lowering the garment of pardon over the defects of sin by the purity of seeking refuge and disclaiming any strength or power.

It is said in the event of [His] help He said ***then none can overcome you***. However, in the event of being forsaken, He did not say 'then there is no helper for you' but rather said by

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<sup>720</sup> Instead of 'shifting hues' or 'variegations' (*talwīnāt*) found in the Basyūnī edition, the MS K117, f.44a has 'formations' (*takwīnāt*).

<sup>721</sup> The word in MS K117, 44b 'separation' (*firqa*) makes more sense here than the word '*qurba*' in the Basyūnī edition.

way of hint and reply<sup>722</sup> *then who is there who can help you after Him?*. There is a subtlety here with respect to the niceties of the properties of speech.

[3:161] *It is not for a prophet to be fraudulent; whoever defrauds shall bring what he has defrauded on the Day of Resurrection; then every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged.*

He has made the states of the prophets free of the stain of treacherous actions. Those to whom We gave the message to bear to Our servants convey it to those who should receive it. They are not troubled with the matter of any close friend without Our command and they do not hold back in conveying the share of anyone when We have commanded it, harboring malice. Don't you see how [the Prophet] said of Abū Ṭālib, 'Go and bury him' when the Commander of the Believers 'Alī (ra) said to him, 'Your erring uncle has died'.<sup>723</sup> And how could he have accepted banishment for the killer of Ḥamza when he became a Muslim?<sup>724</sup>

It is said it was not for any prophet (ṣ) to give Our secrets to any but the people to whom they were meant. Rather, to each was revealed what they were meant to hear. Thus, in the tradition: *We were commanded to reveal (yunzil) to the people [according to] their stations (manāzil).*

[3:162-3] *Is he who follows God's beatitude like him who is laden with God's anger, whose abode is hell? An evil journey's end! \* They are of degrees before God; and God sees what they do.*

The one with whom He is well pleased<sup>725</sup> throughout eternity is not equal to the one with whom He is displeased and has abandoned to his states and made him rely on his own actions, oblivious to the witnessing of His favors. Following God's beatitude is in separating oneself from what has been prohibited and embracing that to which one has been commanded. One who divests himself from the prohibited and takes heart in embracing what has been commanded will have followed God's beatitude and will have become deserving of the gardens.

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<sup>722</sup> The word 'reply' (*radd*) from MS K117, f.44b makes more sense here than the word 'symbol' (*ramz*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>723</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives al-Nisā'ī, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Sā'ātī as sources for this story.

<sup>724</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān states that this refers to Waḥshī, the killer of the Prophet's uncle Ḥamza at the Battle of Uhūd.

<sup>725</sup> The Arabic here is *raḍīya* 'anhu, a verb from the same root as 'beatitude' (*riḍwān*).

*They are of degrees before God:* i.e., they are the possessors of degrees in the decree (*ḥukm*) of God – happy are those who have been brought close and wretched are those who have been kept at a distance.

[3:164] *Truly God was gracious to the believers when He sent to them a messenger from among their own to recite to them His verses, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book, wisdom, though before, they were in clear error.*

He gave goodness to them in abundance and favored them with generous blessings, for He sent someone like Muṣṭafā, the lord of mankind (ṣ) to them. [The Prophet] taught them their religion (*dīn*) and made their proofs clear to them. He belonged to them in every way but they were not grateful for his blessings, did not respect his right, and were not able to see what he guided them to, nor refrain from straying in error. This is a description of his enemies who rejected and were arrogant. As for the believers, they assumed the grace in the choice. They received the command in hearing and obeying to the utmost degree so they were happy in this world and the Hereafter and became deserving of generosity and nearness from God.

[3:165] *And why, when distress befell you, and you had afflicted twice the like of it, did you say, 'How is this?' Say: 'It is from yourselves. Surely God has power over everything.'*

It is the habitual practice of humans to forget their own error and disobedience and to revert to accusing God for what comes to them in trials, loss, and all kinds of unpleasant and difficult things. But the truth is, that for those who pursue different sorts<sup>726</sup> of crimes, He will not forget to bring down revenge.

[3:166-167] *And what afflicted you, the day the two hosts encountered, was by God's leave, and that He might know the believers. \* And that He might also know the hypocrites when it was said to them, 'Come now, fight in the way of God or defend', they said, 'If we knew how to fight we would follow you'. They that day were nearer to unbelief than to belief, saying with their mouths that which was not in their hearts. And God knows best what they hide.*

He lightened the grave calamity the believers and possessors of insight met on the Day of Uḥud by saying that that encounter was by God's leave. Surely a trial that afflicts by God's leave is sweeter than honey and more desirable than any blessing. Then He spoke of those who were not sincere comrades, how they offered excuses and were lazy:

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<sup>726</sup> The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with *ṣunūf* from MS K117, f.44b.

*Similarly, when the one who is tired*

*wants to break things off*

*He becomes weary of being together*

*and says, 'That was that'.<sup>727</sup>*

***Saying with their mouths that which was not in their hearts:*** Verily they gave honey to drink but plotted to put poison in it for him.<sup>728</sup> They plotted and God plotted and God was aware of those who plotted.

***[3:168] Those who said to their brothers, whilst they themselves stayed put, 'Had they obeyed us, they would not have been slain'. Say: 'Then avert death from yourselves, if you speak the truth'.***

Those who relied on that to which their souls seduced them in preferring their caprice, and who then opposed those who turn things over to the decrees of divine fate, saying, 'If only they had taken warning about going out to the battle, they would not have fallen from the station of security' – these thoughts are blameworthy and these hearts have lost the witnessing of realization. Say to them, O Muḥammad, '[Then] extend the life of your souls against the attacks of death'. How would they be able to do that? How preposterous!

***[3:169-170] Count not those who were slain in God's way, as dead, but rather, living with their Lord, provided for [by Him]. \* Rejoicing in what God has given them of His bounty, and rejoicing, for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind, that no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.***

Life in remembrance of the Real after the lower selves have been annihilated in the Real is more perfect than remaining with the blessings of created beings and being veiled from the Real.

It is said that the one whose heir is the Living is one who does not disappear and cannot die, even if he is killed:

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<sup>727</sup> This verse is also cited in the commentary on Qur'ānic verse 2:19, with an additional verse preceding it: *Truly when the noble one gives you his love, he veils the ugly and brings the beautiful to light.* Muṣṭafā found these lines in *Muḥāḍarāt al-'Uḍabā'* but without attribution (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p. 112).

<sup>728</sup> The MS K117, f.45a has 'them' instead of 'him' here.

*Surely bodies*

*have been brought into existence for death,  
so the slaying of a human being in God,  
without doubt, is better.*<sup>729</sup>

***And rejoicing, for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind:*** Those who know their loved ones are waiting for them while they are in comfort and ease would not take pleasure in living without being with them [so God responded to their concern and revealed this verse for those left behind].

***[3:171] Joyful in grace and bounty from God, and that God does not let the wage of believers go to waste.***

The occasion of their being joyful and its cause is a favor and act of grace from God, i.e., how could they be joyful if not for His favor and grace to them? Their being joyful through the act of grace is only because they are His servants and He is their Protector (*mawlā*). If not for His grace and favor to them, they would not be in this state.

***[3:172] [For] those who responded to God and the Messenger after the wounds had afflicted them, those who did good among them and feared, shall be a great wage.***

[The word] ‘to respond’ (*istijāba*) has an advantage and superiority over [the word] ‘to answer’ (*ijāba*) by way of allusion, not from the Arabic.<sup>730</sup> It is that they respond willingly, not under compulsion. They respond to God without it entailing the bearing of a difficulty. Rather, [they respond] by the directive of the heart (*qalb*), the love of the heart (*fu’ād*), the free choice of the spirit and finding delight in bearing [God’s] decree (*ḥukm*). So the response to the Real is through His existence (*wujūd*) and the response to the Messenger (‘*a*’) is through taking on character traits (*takhalluq*) as prescribed from His limits (*hudūd*). The response of the Real is through realization in the clarity (*ṣafā’*) of the truth of Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) and the response of the Messenger (‘*a*’) is through fidelity (*wafā’*) in upholding servanthood (‘*ubūdiyya*).

<sup>729</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.45a here in the word ‘bodies’ (*abdān*) rather than ‘worshippers’ (‘*ubdān*’) as found in the Basyūnī edition. This is also the word found in the verse Muṣṭafā locates attributed to al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī in one source and ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib in another: *Surely bodies have been brought into existence for death, so the slaying of a human being by the sword in God is better* (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p.93).

<sup>730</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote saying that the subtle distinction al-Qushayrī is making between the two verbs is not related to their etymological forms, i.e., the fourth and tenth forms.

***After the wounds had afflicted them:*** In the beginning of their transactions before the appearance of the lights of disclosure (*tajallā*) to their hearts and the smiling of the realities in their innermost hearts.

***Those who did good among them:*** Doing good is that you worship God as if you see Him<sup>731</sup> – and this is [your] becoming a witness (*mushāhada*) and God-fearing – for if you do not see Him, He sees you – and this is [His] watching over of the state of [your] struggle (*mujāhada*).

***A great wage*** for the people of the beginning later and for the people of the end now.<sup>732</sup>

[3:173] *Those to whom people said, ‘The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them’; but that increased them in faith, and they said, ‘God is sufficient for us, an excellent Guardian is He’.*

Nothing of the circumstances of the present world confused them in their outward forms (*zawāhir*) without opening up for them the gleams of the rising of unveilings in their innermost selves (*asrār*), and they increased in certainty upon certainty. Among the signs of certainty is the independence of hearts in God upon the severance of desires from creatures in imagining aid and support.

[3:174] *So they returned with grace and bounty from God, and no evil touched them, and they followed the beatitude of God; and God is of bounty abounding.*

Such is the way (*sunna*) of the Real (*s*) with those who are sincere in taking refuge with Him, in that He prepares a resting place in the shadow of His sufficiency. No affliction touches them, no pains distress them, and no hardships overcome them.

[3:175] *That is only Satan making fear his friends, therefore do not fear them; but fear Me, if you are believers.*

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<sup>731</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives references for this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī, al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Jazīma, al-Haythamī, Ibn Hajar, al-Zubaydī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Muttaqī al-Hindī.

<sup>732</sup> See al-Qushayrī’s comment on Qur’ānic verses 3:93-94 above for his use of the terms ‘people of the beginning’ and ‘people of the end’.

The allusion in giving power to the urgings of Satan over the hearts of friends is the sincerity of their fleeing to God. This is like a child who has been made afraid by other children, and when he is afraid, he takes himself to none other than his mother. When he comes to her, she takes him to herself, hugs him and presses her cheek to his. Likewise, when the servant is sincere in beseeching God, and returns to Him from his oppositional tendencies, He takes Him under the wing of His closeness and overtakes him with His beautiful kindness.

**[3:176] *Let them not grieve you those that vie with one another in unbelief; they will not hurt God at all. God desires not to assign them any portion in the Hereafter, and theirs is a mighty chastisement.***

He strengthened [Muḥammad's] heart by renewing the firmness of the pact, in that He would not allow any enemy to gloat over his misfortune, nor allow any evil from them to reach him.

**[3:177] *Those who purchase unbelief at the price of faith, they will not hurt God at all, and there awaits them a painful chastisement.***

If they cause harm (*aḍarrū*), it is only to themselves. If they persist (*aṣarrū*), they persist only to their own loss.

*For we were not tormented  
by the distance to their abodes,  
nor did longings  
drive us towards them.*<sup>733</sup>

**[3:178] *And let not the disbelievers suppose that what We indulge them in is better for their souls. We grant them indulgence only that they may increase in sinfulness, and theirs is a humbling chastisement.***

Part of the perfection of the ruse against them and the intensification in their punishment is that We are punishing them even as they do not perceive it. We will increase that degree by degree from whence they know not. We indulge them and they think that it is an act of favor, not considering that it might be an act of revenge. When the underlying forces of the divine preordination emerge to them from their hiding places, they will know that they have lost. It

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<sup>733</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 5, p.77).



was already clear to anyone possessing insight that that which is the cause of disobedience or the motive for forgetfulness cannot be counted among the acts of favor.

**[3:179] *It is not God's purpose to leave the believers in the state in which you are till He shall distinguish the evil one from the good. And it is not God's purpose to apprise you of the Unseen, but God chooses of His messengers whom He will. So believe in God and His messengers; and if you believe and guard [against evil], then yours shall be a great wage.***

He has gathered them together this day with respect to bodies and forms but has distinguished them in realities and meanings, with some wholesome and sweet (*ṭayyib*) in their natural disposition and some corrupt (*khabīth*).<sup>734</sup> Even those who are of mixed constitution are differentiated in the sight of the elect.

***And it is not God's purpose to apprise you of the Unseen:*** Surely the secrets of the Unseen do not appear to those who are sullied by the pollutions of human nature (*bashariyya*). Only the Real (*s*) possesses knowledge of that which is great and small and He selects whoever He wills among His prophets for knowledge of some of His secrets.

**[3:180] *Let them not suppose those who are niggardly with what God has given them of His bounty, that it is better for them; nay, it is worse for them; what they were niggardly with, they shall have hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection; and to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And God is aware of what you do.***

Whoever prefers something to God, He will not bless him in that. No enjoyment in that will last for him in this world and there will be no defense from it in the Hereafter from the punishment.

'Niggardliness', according to the scholars, is the withholding of what is obligatory. According to the allusion, it is holding back something, even if only a particle of wealth or a breath from states.

**[3:181-182] *Verily God has heard the saying of those who said, 'Indeed God is poor, and we are rich'. We shall write down what they have said and their slaying the prophets without right, and We shall say, 'Taste the chastisement of the Burning. \* That is for what your hands have sent before; for God is never unjust towards His servants'.***

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<sup>734</sup> The word 'corrupt' (*khabīth*) from MS K117, f.45b makes more sense here than *khabī'a* from the Basyūnī edition.

If this address were between created beings, it would be a complaint. The complaint to friends about enemies is the way (*sunna*) of lovers.

It is said He knew that there were those among the believers who were slandering people and that was ugly in their speech, but He exposed a greater ugliness. This was to show that the ugly speech of the believers was paltry in comparison to the ugliness of the speech of the disbelievers. It is as if He said: Their speech was ugly in its defamation but the speech of the disbelievers was even uglier since they described Us with what is not appropriate to attribute<sup>735</sup> to Us.

There is also an allusion in it to the call to mankind and leniency for the adversary, for surely God (*s*) did not deprive them of what He gave them in spite of their negligence with respect to His rights.

***We shall write down what they have said:*** These words give cause for embarrassment for the neglectful in the subtlest of allusion. It means that even if they have forgotten their states and words, We will resurrect for them what We have written against them. Their speaker said:

*I have pages*

*in which blame is buried.*

*They will be resurrected one day*

*and the blame will endure:*

*I will be patient*

*until God brings us together*

*but if we meet one day*

*I will speak.*<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> The word 'to attribute' (*naʿt*) in MS K117, f.45b makes more sense here than the word *niʿma* in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>736</sup> Muṣṭafā finds a slightly different version of the second verse in al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf's *Diwān*: *I will be silent unless God brings us together, but if we meet one day I will speak*. He states that the first verse is attributed to Yazīd b. Salma b. al-Ṭathriyya (Muṣṭafā, no. 9, p. 93).

***‘That is for what your hands have sent before: for God is never unjust towards His servants’:*** If this were from one created being to another, it would be like absolving oneself of blame in one’s action [in punishing another]. It is as if He (s) is saying, ‘My servant, the punishment that will come to you on that day is because of your sin. If you had not done it, We would not punish you’.

***[3:183] Those same who said, ‘God has already made covenant with us that we should not believe in any messenger until he bring us an offering to be devoured by fire’. Say: ‘Messengers have come to you before me with clear proofs, and with that which you said. Why did you slay them, then, if you are truthful?’***

They fabricated lies about God (s) in the excuse they put forth for leaving the faith, and they said, ‘Verily we have been commanded not to believe anyone if he does not bring us an offering which he presents to the sky and a fire descends from it and takes the offering, and we see this by our own eyes’. God Most High said, ‘Say to them that those who have come before me among the prophets (‘a) have brought you what you have demanded of me in offering but you did not believe. If I were to accede to you in this, you would once again not believe. For anyone distanced by prior decrees, if the sun were to speak to him with a clear tongue or the mountains prostrate before him, and he were to see all this in a moment of truth, knowledge (‘irfān) would still not enter his heart and he would only increase in doubt upon doubt.

***[3:184] But if they deny you, so were denied messengers before you who came bearing clear proofs, and the Scriptures, and the Illuminating Book.***

i.e., the habitual practice of the disbelievers was to deny the messengers. This was the custom of their ancestors and their descendents will in turn follow their way.

***[3:185] Every soul shall taste of death; you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is moved away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, will have triumphed, the life of this world is but the comfort of delusion.***

i.e., the cup of death is placed in the palm of every living being. Whoever’s soul finds it sweet and agreeable is brought to the intoxication<sup>737</sup> of ecstatic finding. Whoever swallows it with a frowning face falls into the abyss of rejection and is branded by the burning of obstruction, and then the Day of the Resurrection. Those who are protected from the Fire have reached the greatest repose and those who are roasted in the blazing fire have fallen into the greatest tribulation.

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<sup>737</sup> The MS K117, 45b has ‘gratitude’ (shukr) here rather than ‘intoxication’ (sukr).

*The life of this world is but the comfort of delusion* because what is coming is nigh.

**[3:186] *You shall surely be tried in your property; and in your selves, and you shall bear from those who were given the Scripture before you, and from those who are idolaters, much hurt, but if you are patient, and fear – surely that is true resolve.***

He spared them the greater part of the occasions of harm in alerting them to their coming before the attacks. He taught them that the better of the two affairs for them was to prefer patience and to choose to be calm under the streams of the decrees.

**[3:187] *And when God made covenant with those who had been given the Scripture, ‘You shall expound it to people, and not conceal it’. But they rejected it behind their backs, and bought it with a small price; how evil is what they have bought!***

He said that they made pledges to not fail in their living up to [the Scripture], but they broke the ties of the covenant by what they turned to in disbelief. Then it became clear that the comfortable substitutions they took in exchange for leaving religion would have no blessings for them.

**[3:188] *Do not reckon that those who rejoice in what they have brought, and who love to be praised for what they have not done – do not reckon them secure from the chastisement; there shall be a painful chastisement for them.***

Surely those whose hearts hold to viewing the creation, there is no portion for them in His secret. Do not think that their punishment will be delayed to the Day of Resurrection. No, they are not secure from the punishment right now. What punishment is more intense than being returned to creation and veiled from the Real?

**[3:189] *To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and God has power over all things.***

The allusion in this verse is to His lack of need for what is in engendered existence. How could He have any need of them? But they will not find any substitute for Him, or any equivalent.

[3:190-3:191] *Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people of pith. \* Those who remember God, standing and sitting and on their sides,*

The Real (s) speaks to ordinary people through signs containing admonitions and reports, while He speaks to the elect with regards to their souls. He (s) said: *We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls* (41:53). The outer signs lead to the knowledge of certainty (‘ilm al-yaqīn) while the inner signs lead to the essence of certainty (‘ayn al-yaqīn).

The allusion to the alternation of night and day is to the alternation of the nights of the servants. The nights of the people of communion are short and the nights of the people of separation are long. [One person] said this:

*Months pass –*

*we have not noticed*

*their midpoints*

*or ends.*<sup>738</sup>

And he said:

*Your morning is drunkenness*

*and the night is a hangover.*

*You slept while*

*the days of happiness are short.*<sup>739</sup>

The second one said:

*Nights after the travelers left*

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<sup>738</sup> Muṣṭafā notes that the verse is attributed to Majnūn Laylā and also to al-Ṣimma b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qushayrī (Muṣṭafā no. 17, p.72).

<sup>739</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to find this verse in any other source (Muṣṭafā, no. 21, p.62-3).

*have long shapes.*

*[Now] the night of the lovers*

*is long.*<sup>740</sup>

The third one had nothing to say about the length or brevity of the night, for he said, because of what overwhelmed him:

*How should I know*

*whether the night was long or not?*

*How can one*

*who is roasting know that?*

*If I had been occupied*

*with the length of the night,*

*I would have been deprived*

*of watching the stars.*<sup>741</sup>

**For people of pith:** The people of pith are those whose intellects have been kept sound from the drunkenness of forgetfulness. The sign of one who is like that is that his gaze will be through the Real. When he gazes from the Real to the Real, his gaze is direct. But when he gazes from the creation to the Real, his characteristic is the opposite and his thoughts are altered, causing confusion.

**Those who remember God, standing and sitting:** Remembrance has claimed every one of their moments, so that if they stand it is in remembrance of Him. If they sit or sleep or prostrate, all of their states are consumed in the realities of remembrance. They stand in the proper manner of remembering Him and they refrain from [literally, 'sit from'] opposing His command. They stand by means of the clarity of states but refrain from observing them or

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<sup>740</sup> Muṣṭafā corrects the verse as found in the Basyūnī, identifying it as one of al-Mutanabbī's (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p.94). I have translated the al-Mutanabbī verse because it matches the version in MS K117, f.46a in all but one word.

<sup>741</sup> The translation here follows the version in MS K117, f.46a, which matches the verses Muṣṭafā finds attributed to Abū Nuwās in two sources. He also finds the same verses attributed to Khālīd b. al-Kātib and Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī in other sources (Muṣṭafā, no. 10, p.24).

claiming anything concerning them.<sup>742</sup> They remember God standing on the carpet of service, and then they sit on the carpet of nearness. Those who are not safe in the beginning of their standing from negligence will not be safe in their sitting in the end in the quality of presence (*ḥuḍūr*). Remembrance is the path (*tarīq*) of the Real (*s*). The aspirants (*murīdūn*) cannot travel a path that is more sound or clear than the path of remembrance. If there were only His words, ‘*I sit among those who remember Me*’,<sup>743</sup> concerning it, that would be sufficient.

Those who remember are of several types and that is because of the difference in their states. There is a remembrance which causes the contraction (*qabḍ*) of the one who remembers because of what he remembers of a prior deficiency of his, or something ugly which came from him, so his embarrassment holds him back from his remembrance. That is a remembrance of contraction (*qabḍ*). There is a remembrance which causes the expansion (*baṣṭ*) of the one who remembers because of what he finds in the pleasures of remembrance, and then from the approach of the Real to him in the beauty of His drawing him close to Him. There is the one who remembers who is effaced in the witnessing of what he remembers. The remembrance flows from his tongue habitually and his heart has been cut off in what has appeared to it. There is the one who remembers who is the locus for exaltation, and he abstains from remembering Him and considers the mentioning of Him unclean. It is as if, because of his adopting contemptibility with regards to [remembrance], he does not want there to be any praise for Him in the world and the Hereafter, nor remaining, nor being, nor splendor. Their speaker said:

*I cannot remember you*  
*without an anxiety that curses me,*  
*my heart, my spirit, my innermost self*  
*upon remembering you.*

*It is as if a lookout from you*  
*called to me,*  
*‘Watch out!’, ‘woe unto you!’*  
*and ‘beware of this remembrance!’*<sup>744</sup>

<sup>742</sup> Basyūnī notes al-Qushayrī’s reference to the interpretation of Abū Bakr b. Fūrak here, which is cited in his *Risāla: Standing in the proper manner of remembering Him and sitting (or ‘refraining’) from claiming anything about it* (Vol. 2, p. 467; Knysh translation p.234).

<sup>743</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān does not give a source for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>744</sup> Muṣṭafā notes that these verses can be found in a slightly different version in al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (vol. 2, p.468; Knysh translation, p. 234) where they are said to have been recited by Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq. He also states that they are recited by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ja‘far al-Katānī in the *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā’* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p.89).

Remembrance is the sign of divine friendship (*walāya*), the clear evidence of communion (*wusla*), the verification of desire (*irāda*), the mark of the soundness of the beginning and the indicator of the purity of the end. There is nothing beyond remembrance. All of the praiseworthy qualities return to remembrance and arise from it.

[3:191 cont'd] *and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain.*

Reflection is the attribute<sup>745</sup> of every seeker and its fruit is union, provided there is knowledge. When reflection<sup>746</sup> becomes free of defects, its possessor will arrive at the watering places of realization. When he has obtained witnessing and presence, he will rise from reflection to the outer limits of remembrance and remembrance is endless. Then the ascetics (*zāhidūn*) reflect upon the passing away of the present world and the insignificance of its promise to those who seek it, and by that reflection they increase in their asceticism towards it. The worshippers (*ʿābidūn*) reflect upon the beautiful reward, and they increase in their eagerness and longing for it. Those who know (*ʿarīfūn*) reflect upon blessings and kindnesses, and they increase in their love for the Real (*s*).

[3:191 cont'd] *Glory be to You! So guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.*

The glorification (*tasbīḥ*) alludes to the swimming (*sabḥ*) of the innermost selves in the sea of grandeur.

[3:192] *Our Lord, whomever You admit into the Fire, You will have abased, and the evildoers shall have no helpers.*

Whoever You put to the test in the future by burning, You will have abased. And whoever you put to the test by separation in the present, you will have made him miserable. Whoever you have entrusted with the good fortune of communion, You will have sheltered him and brought him close.

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<sup>745</sup> The word 'attribute' (*naʿt*) from MS K117, f.46b is preferable here to the word 'blessing' (*niʿma*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>746</sup> The word 'reflection' (*fikr*) from MS K117, f.46b makes more sense here than 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) in the Basyūnī edition.



[3:193] *‘Our Lord, we have heard a caller calling to belief, saying, “Believe in your Lord!” And we believed. So, our Lord, forgive us our sins and absolve us of our evil deeds, and take us [in death] with the pious.*

It means ‘We have answered the caller but You are the Guide, so do not leave us to ourselves and do not raise the shadow of your care from us’. Faith (*īmān*) is included among the causes of security (*amān*) and one only has faith in the Real from the Real granting him security. The security of the Real for the servant, which is His granting him protection, brings about the faith of the servant in the Real, which is his affirmation (*taṣdīq*) of Him and his knowledge (*maʿrifā*) of Him.<sup>747</sup>

*And take us [in death] with the pious:* They are those chosen for the realities of declaring oneness (*ḥaqaʿiq al-tawḥīd*), those who stand for God by the conditions of single-mindedness (*sharāʾiṭ al-tafrīd*), and stay with God by the special characteristics of disengagement (*khaṣāʾiṣ al-tajrīd*).<sup>748</sup>

[3:194] *‘Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and abase us not on the Day of Resurrection. You will not fail the tryst’.*

Verify for us what You have promised us through the words of your intermediaries in the perfection of blessed happiness (*ikmāl al-nuʿmā*) and the absolution of evil (*takfīr al-suʿā*),<sup>749</sup> and forgiveness for pursuing our own whims (*hawā*) in the past.

[3:195] *And their Lord answers them, ‘I do not let the labor of any laborer among you go to waste, be you male or female – the one of you is as the other: and those who emigrated, and were expelled from their habitations, those who suffered hurt in My way, and fought, and were slain – them I shall surely absolve of their evil deeds, and I shall admit them to Gardens underneath which river flow’. A reward from God! And God – with Him is the fairest reward.*

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<sup>747</sup> Al-Qushayrī’s concern in this passage is to show that the believer comes to believe in God through God’s action, not his own.

<sup>748</sup> Note the rhyming pattern. Al-Qushayrī also pairs *tawḥīd*, *tafrīd* and *tajrīd* in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:21, which helps clarify his use of the terms: Worship is becoming harmonious (*muwāfāqa*) with the command and it is pouring all energy into requests for realization of the Unseen. The declaration of oneness (*tawḥīd*) enters one through the heart, and disengagement (*tajrīd*) through the innermost self, and becoming single-minded (*tafrīd*) through seeking, and humility through the soul, and the surrender is to the decree (*ḥukm*).

<sup>749</sup> The blank in Basyūnī has been completed with the phrase *takfīr al-sūʿā* from MS K117, f.46b. God’s ‘absolution of evil deeds’ is mentioned in Qur’ānic verses 3:193 and 3:195.

How can He not respond to them when He is the One who prompts them to call [on Him] and He is the One who is responsible for answering them. His promise of a beautiful reward for the call increases according to what they ask for from their needs.

***Those who emigrated:*** leaving their familiar places and things.

***Those who suffered hurt in My way:*** they were abused by poverty and blame and subjected to all kinds of trials and pains.

***And fought, and were slain:*** they tasted different stages, the sweet and the bitter.

***Them I shall surely absolve of their evil deeds:*** it means We will give them more than what they hoped for and more than what their acts and states merit.

***[3:196-3:197] Let it not delude you, that the disbelievers go to and fro in the land, \* a little enjoyment; then their abode is Hell – an evil cradling!***

Do not let any doubt seize you, thinking that they have any value or worth with Us. Rather, the days are few and breaths limited. Afterwards there will be grief upon grief and sorrow upon sorrow.

***[3:198] But those who fear their Lord – for them shall be Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; a hospitality from God Himself. That which is with God is better for the pious.***

The state of those whom we have branded with ignominy of separation is wretched while the state and intimacy of those whom We have raised in steps for Our sake is blessed. They attain the lasting reward and remain in communion and felicity. What God has stored away for them is better than what they had hoped for by their own free choice.

***[3:199] Verily, there are some among the People of the Scripture who believe in God, and what has been revealed to you, and what has been revealed to them, humble before God, not purchasing with the verses of God a small price. Those – their wage is with their Lord. God is swift at reckoning.***

He means those who have been favored by a beautiful destiny – they are with the friends of God in being blessed just as they are with them in their destiny.

[3:200] *O you who believe, be patient and vie in patience, be steadfast; fear God so that you will prosper.*

Patience (*ṣabr*) concerns what the servant alone possesses. Vying in patience (*muṣābara*) is with the enemy. Being steadfast (*ribāt*) is a type of patience but with a particular objective.

It is said the beginning of patience is affecting patience (*taṣabbur*),<sup>750</sup> then being patient (*ṣabr*), then vying in patience (*muṣabara*), then keeping patient (*iṣṭibār*),<sup>751</sup> which is the end.

It is said, ‘Be patient in obedient acts and in refraining from disobedient acts; vie in patience in leaving caprice and cravings and cutting off desire and attachments; and hold fast in uprightness in companionship in all times and states’.

It is said, ‘Be patient with your lower selves, vie in patience with your hearts, and hold fast with your innermost selves’.

It is said, ‘Be patient looking to the reward, vie in patience in desiring nearness, and hold fast in the place of proximity and nearness in witnessing the beauty and might’.

Patience’s taste is bitter when the servant gulps it in [the state of] absence. Its taste is pleasant when it is drunk in witnessing and vision.

***Fear God so you will prosper:*** Prosperity is the victory over desire. Their aspiration today is victory over their lower selves and in that their deliverance is complete. When they are victorious over their lower selves, their sacrifice is by the swords of [spiritual] effort (*mujāhada*) and hardening them on the trunks of toil. After their annihilation (*fanā*) from their lower selves, they attain their going on (*baqā*) through God.

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<sup>750</sup> i.e., acting as if one were patient, even if one is not.

<sup>751</sup> Al-Qushayrī is comparing the different verb forms from the root *ṣ - b - r* here. The eighth form, *iṣṭabara* here is used to indicate the highest practice of patience. The verb in this form is used three times in the Qur’ān, while the first form verb *ṣabara* occurs much more frequently. Al-Qushayrī seems to be using the eighth form to indicate a type of patience which is firmly established in an individual.



## ***Sūrat al-Nisā'***

### ***In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful***

They disagree about the derivation of the [word] 'name' (*al-ism*). Some say it is derived from *sumūw*, which is 'elevation' or 'exaltedness' (*'ulūw*), while others say it is derived from *sima*, which is 'branding' (*kayya*). Both of them are in the allusion: For those who say it is derived from *sumūw*, it is a name (*ism*) – the one who mentions it is elevated (*samat*), as is the state of the one who recognizes it, and the aspiration of the one who becomes its companion. The elevation (*sumūw*) of rank entails an abundance of rewards and favors: The elevation of state entails the appearance of lights in the innermost selves. The elevation of aspiration entails freedom from the bondage of others.<sup>752</sup> For those who say its root is from *sima*, it is a name – the one who seeks it is branded (*wusima*) by the mark (*sima*) of worship (*'ibāda*). The one who becomes its companion is branded by the mark of spiritual desire (*irāda*). The one who loves it is branded by the mark of the elect (*khawāṣṣ*). The one who recognizes it is branded by the mark of distinction (*ikhtiṣāṣ*). The mark of worship entails fear of the fire that throws sparks at its inhabitants.<sup>753</sup> The mark of spiritual desire entails bashfulness for Paradise, which is eager to captivate its inhabitants with its noble dignity. The mark of the elect entails the loss of any conceit about the [human] aggregate of water and clay being worthy of nearness. The mark of distinction entails the erasure of the decree before the overwhelming authority of reality.

It is said: A name whose measure elevates the thoughts of the one who persists with it, while the heart of the one who separates from it is branded by the burning of separation.

His name indicates all of this.

***[4:1] O people, fear your Lord, Who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered many men and women; and fear God by whom you claim [your rights] from one another and kinship ties. Surely God has been watchful over you.***

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<sup>752</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.47a in the last part of this sentence: *al-taḥarrur 'an riqq al-aghayār*.

<sup>753</sup> A reference to Qur'ānic verse 77:32: *Indeed it throws up sparks, [huge] like palace edifices*.

‘People’ (*al-nās*) is a generic noun whose etymology is uncertain. It is said man (*al-ins*) is called human (*ins*) because of his outward visibility (*zuhūr*).<sup>754</sup> According to this, the allusion is: ‘O you who I have made appear<sup>755</sup> from the concealment of non-existence (‘*adam*)’<sup>756</sup> by the decree of My prescriptive command (*taklīf*), then I chose whom I willed from you for My honoring, and deprived whom I willed among you of My guidance and giving knowledge, and moved you to what I willed – rather, conjoined you to what I willed by the decree of My free disposal’.

It is said: ‘I did not cause anything else like you to appear from nonexistence and did not make appear to anyone else what I made appear to you in your states.

It is said: ‘I named you ‘mankind’ (*insān*) because of your forgetfulness (*nisyān*).<sup>757</sup> Surely, if you forget Me, there is nothing of lesser value than you but if you forget all that is other than me,<sup>758</sup> there is none who sees more clearly<sup>759</sup> than you’.

It is said there is no limit to the trial of the one who forgets the Real, while there is no end to the sublimity of the state of the one who forgets creation.

It is said: He said to the sinners, ‘O you who have forgotten<sup>760</sup> My covenant, who have rejected My love and gone beyond My limit, it is time for you to return to My door so that you may lay claim to My kindness and affirmation’. He said to those who know, ‘O you who have forgotten your worldly portion in Us, and have kept your glance and expression from any other, your right has become of great magnitude for Us. Helping you has become incumbent with Us and your value has been exalted before us.

It is said, ‘O you who have been gladdened (*anista*)<sup>761</sup> by the breeze of My hospitality, who have found rest in the witness of My face, and who have been overcome by the majesty of My measure – you are the most sublime of My servants to Me’.

<sup>754</sup> As opposed to the jinn, who are hidden from sight.

<sup>755</sup> The translation follows *aḥartukum* as found in MS K117, f.47a.

<sup>756</sup> The word found in MS K117, f.47a here is ‘forgetfulness’ (*ghafla*).

<sup>757</sup> Throughout this passage al-Qushayrī refers to two possible roots for the word *al-nās*: *a – n – s*, from which comes the word *ins* mentioned above, and *n – y – s*, the root of the word *nisyān*.

<sup>758</sup> The translation follows *dhikr ghayrī* from MS K117, f.47a here rather than *dhikrī* from the Basyūnī text.

<sup>759</sup> The translation follows *abṣar* from MS K117, f.47a here rather than *aḥaṭṭu* from the Basyūnī text.

<sup>760</sup> The active form of the verb ‘you forgot’ (*nasīta*) from MS K117, f.47a has been used here rather than ‘you were made to forget’ (*unsīta*) as found in the Basyūnī text, since it matches the active form of the verb ‘you rejected’ that follows.

<sup>761</sup> The verb ‘to be sociable’ or ‘to become gladdened by someone’s company’ (*anisa*) is from the same root as ‘human’ (*ins*), *a – n – s*.

***Fear your Lord:*** God-fearingness (*taqwā*) is the sum of all the acts of obedience. The first part of it is abandoning polytheism (*shirk*) and the last part of it is being wary (*ittiqā*) of everything other [than Him]. The foremost of those things which are other [than Him] for you is your lower self (*nafs*) and those who are wary of themselves stand with God without any station (*maqām*) and without witnessing any state (*hāl*). They stand for God, not for the sake of witnessing any portion in this life or the end.

***Who created you of a single soul,*** who is Adam (‘*a*). Since we were created from him and he was created by the Hand [of God], we are also thus. Just as the merit of Adam (‘*a*) appeared through him over all created beings and things, so are we to be described. God Most High said: *they are the best of creatures* [98:7].

The term ‘soul’ (*nafs*) is for the generality and generality necessarily entails universality.<sup>762</sup>

***And from it created its mate:*** The Real (*s*) decreed the cohabiting of humans one with another in order to perpetuate offspring and to restore the similar with the similar, so He connected like to like.

***And from the pair of them scattered many men and women:*** He has made known to intelligent beings the perfection of the deliberative power in what He has made appear from the demonstrative proofs of divine lordship and indications of wisdom, inasmuch as the creation of all mankind is from the progeny of a single person in spite of all the differences in their outward appearances, the variety of their forms, and the disparity in their characters. Surely no two of them are alike and each has a particular face in form and character, and in aspiration and state, so glory be to the One for Whom there is no limit to the things which He has decreed and made known.

***And fear God:*** a repetition of the command to God-fearingness that emphasizes His decree.

***You claim [your rights] from one another and kinship ties:*** i.e., you are wary of cutting off kinship ties, for whoever cuts off kin is himself cut off and whoever connects with them is connected.

***Surely God has been watchful over you,*** observing, witnessing, counting every one of your breaths, seeing your senses. He is governing your steps, generating your movements and

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<sup>762</sup> Perhaps al-Qushayrī merely means to point out here that all human beings have a soul.

absence of movement. Whoever knows that He is a watcher over him should be shy before Him.

[4:2] *Give the orphans their property and do not exchange the evil for the good, and absorb not their property into your property; surely that is a great crime:*

Whoever has been given charge over others and then acts unjustly towards those under his charge, his adversary is his Lord, for He (s) avenges for His servants what He does not avenge for His own sake. If the protector of the orphan acts with justice and beneficence, he has a right before God. If he behaves badly and aggressively, his adversary is God.

[4:3-4:4] *If you fear that you will not act justly towards the orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two or three or four, but if you fear you will not be equitable, then only one, or what your right hands own; thus, it is likelier that you will not be unjust. \* And give women their dowries as a free gift;*

God granted free men the right to marry four women at the same time. He mandated justice between them, so the servant must respect what is obligatory. If he knows that in choosing this permitted thing, he would attempt to uphold this obligation but would fall short in it, he should not do it since the obligation is something for which he is responsible.

[4:4 cont'd] *but if they are pleased to offer you any of it of their own accord, consume it with wholesome appetite.*

This denotes the fact that the food of the chivalrous (*fiṭyān*)<sup>763</sup> and generous is wholesome because they only feed others from good-heartedness. The food of the miserly is rotten because they look only to themselves and feed others out of obligation not good-heartedness. [The Prophet] (s) said: *The food of the generous is a remedy while the food of the miser is a disease.*<sup>764</sup>

[4:5] *But do not give to the foolish your property, which God has assigned to you as maintenance; provide for them thereof, and clothe them, and speak to them decent words.*

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<sup>763</sup> In the 'Chapter on Chivalry' (*bāb al-futūwa*) in his *Risāla*, al-Qushayrī defines the chivalrous as those who are always striving to serve others (vol. 2, pgs. 472-9; Knysh translation pgs. 237-242).

<sup>764</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān gives al-Zubaydī and al-Suyūṭī al-Ḥalabī as sources for this Hadith. The translation follows MS K117, f.47a in the last part of this sentence: *al-taḥarrur 'an riqq al-aghyār*.



The foolish are those who keep you from the Real and distract you from the Lord. The foolish are those dependents and children who prefer their worldly portions over the rights of God Most High.

***Which God has assigned to you as maintenance:*** Holding to decent behavior in the situation is more profitable for you than to expose yourself to loss of honor, petitioning, begging and contrivances. Making sacrifices is better than withholding from the point of view of freeing the heart and relying on patience, but to intend to ask from others and to make yourself and your dependents a burden on people – it is more suitable to preserve a sufficient amount for yourselves from what God has assigned to you. Then you can be generous with what it in excess of your needs.

***Provide for them thereof, and clothe them, and speak to them decent words:*** When what you possess is ample enough to extend to their circumstances, do not hold back from what you know of their needs out of fear of poverty in the future. If your hand is held back from spending on them, don't let your tongue loose in speaking ill.

It is said when your lower self calls you to spend in a useless way, you are the most foolish of the foolish, so do not yield to it.

***[4:6] Try well the orphans until they reach the age of marrying; then, if you perceive in them maturity, deliver their property to them; consume it not wastefully and in haste, lest they should grow up. If any man is rich, let him be abstinent; if he is poor, let him consume honorably. And when you deliver to them their property, take witnesses over them. God suffices as a reckoner.***

Maturity of intellect is to be abstentious and to hold to the religion. It is generosity and the preservation of honor, companionship with elders, and striving to witness the good and perform acts of servanthood as decreed by the command.

It is said the one who is mature is the one who is guided to his Lord. When a need arises in him, he does not rely on his own power or strength, his own directing or free choice.

***[4:7] To the men belongs a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, and to the women belongs a share of what parents and kinsmen leave, whether it be little or much — an obligatory share.***

The rule of inheritance does not vary because of virtue or good qualities, nor is it different because of fault, defect or sin. If a man dies leaving two sons, their rights are equivalent even if one of them is pious and God-fearing and the other wicked and disobedient. The God-fearing one does not get more because of his God-fearingness and the wicked one does not get less because of his wickedness. Likewise, the rule of faith is the beginning of a gift for Muslims. God Most High said: *Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants whom We chose.* [35:32]. Then He said: *Yet some of them are those who wrong themselves, and some of them...* [35:32].<sup>765</sup>

**[4:8] *And when the division is attended by kinsmen, and orphans, and the poor, grant them out of it; and speak to them honorable words.***

**When the division** of the inheritance **is attended** by those who possess its shares and are the legal heirs, and others who have no [legal] portion and who are poor [also] attend, do not deprive them of that, for surely the one who is legally entitled has been given responsibility. Say to them, ‘When the youth attains full age, we speak to him so that he will give us something’<sup>766</sup> and this is the meaning of His words: ***and speak to them honorable words***. In this is a subtle allusion to those who have sinned. When they are present at His court in the future and the Real (s) pardons those who were obedient and gives them the rewards for their deeds, He will not deprive the poor Muslims among you of the pardon, if God wills, after they were among the people (*ahl*) of faith. Likewise, you were not present on the day of division and you have no prior entitlement. What you have been worthy (*ahhala*)<sup>767</sup> of in knowing him is through His favor, in spite of His knowing the lapses that occurred in your states.

**[4:9] *And let them fear those who, if they leave behind them weak offspring would be afraid for them; let them fear God and speak pertinent words.***

He explained in this verse that which the Muslim should hold on to for his dependents is not wealth, but God-fearingness and righteousness because He did not say, ‘So let them gather their wealth, let them multiply real estate for them, and let them leave behind the household goods. Rather, He said: ***let them fear God*** for He cares for the righteous.

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<sup>765</sup> The rest of the verse is: *are moderate, and some are those who take the lead in [performing] good works by the leave of God. That is the greatest favour!*

<sup>766</sup> I think what al-Qushayrī means here is that the one who gives should always remember that he may be in need himself one day and will want to be the recipient of someone else’s generosity.

<sup>767</sup> Al-Qushayrī seems to be playing here with the concept of having a community or family (*ahl*) and the second form verb from the same root (*a – h – l*), which means to made worthy or deserving of something.

**[4:10] *Those who consume the property of orphans unjustly, are only consuming fire in their bellies and they shall be exposed a blaze.***

Only the Real (s) takes on advocacy for the orphan because there is no one other than Him for the orphan. Everyone and his affair is to Him, so he is absolved of his own strength and power. The Real (s) avenges for him what He does not avenge for Himself.

**[4:11] *God charges you concerning your children, to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females; and if they be women more than two, then for them two-thirds of what he leaves; but if she be one then to her a half; and to his parents, to each one of the two the sixth of what he leaves, if he has a child; but if he has no child, and his heirs are his parents, then to his mother a third; or, if he has siblings, to his mother a sixth after any bequest that he may bequeath, or any debt.***

The word ‘charge’ (*waṣiyya*) here means ‘command’.<sup>768</sup> He (s) set the terms of the inheritance among the inheritors for what is due from two aspects – the apportioning and the inheritance by the group of relatives (*ta ṣīb*). The inheritance by the group of relatives is stronger than the apportioning because it comprises all of the wealth whereas the greater part of the portions cannot exceed two-thirds [of the estate]. Therefore, the division [of the estate] begins with those who possess of the ordained portions and they are the weakest in terms of entitlement while the group of relatives (*aṣaba*) has the stronger right. [The Prophet] (s) said: **Whatever remains of the portions goes to the nearest male relative.**<sup>769</sup> Thus is His way (*sunna*) forever, just as in [God] Most High’s words: *Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants whom We chose.* [35:32] We gave them the Book as the inheritance. Then He showed preference for the wrongdoer over those who take the lead. [Those who take the lead] are weaker in their claims for the showing of generosity with the wrongdoers because [the latter] are broken-hearted and unable to withstand the prolonged deferral.<sup>770</sup>

***To the male the equivalent of the portion of two females:*** If the matter were to be by strict measuring, the female would be more worthy in being preferred because of her weakness and

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<sup>768</sup> The word *waṣiyya* can mean ‘directive’ or ‘will’.

<sup>769</sup> The group of relatives (*aṣaba*) is determined by male lineage and leadership. For a good summary of how the practices of inheritance changed from pre-Islamic times, see the article ‘Mīrāth’ by A. Layish in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Basyūnī quotes the full version of this *ḥadīth* as found in al-Bukhārī.

<sup>770</sup> In other words, just as those with a weaker claim to the inheritance receive their portions first, so will those with a weaker claim to God’s generosity go first in the final judgment.

her inability to move about freely, but His decree (s) does not require justification (*ghayr al-mu'allal*).

[4:11 cont'd] *Your parents and children — you know not which of them is nearer in benefit to you, a prescription from God; surely God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

Children benefit you from their service and parents by their compassion, the parents in the state of your weakness in the beginning of your life and the children in the state of your weakness at the end of your life.

[4:12] *And for you a half of what your wives leave, if they have no children; but if they have children, then for you a fourth of what they leave, after any bequest they may bequeath, or any debt: a fourth of what you leave, if you have no children; but if you have children, then for them an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you may bequeath, or any debt. If it be a man leaving an inheritance and not having a direct heir, or it be a woman, but it be that such, has a brother or a sister, then to each of the two a sixth; but if they be more than that, then they share a third after any bequest to be bequeathed or any debt without prejudice; a charge from God. God is Knowing, Forbearing.*

The allusion in establishing inheritance for relatives by blood and marriage is that the relative is sorrowful when the individual dies so God compensates the heir for what he endures and alleviates his heart from the ache with the inherited wealth. Thus His way (s) is to compensate for the suffering of the injured, a generosity from Him, not an obligation upon Him, as some people imagine. All those who were closest by blood or strongest by marital tie to the deceased are the most entitled to his inheritance. With regards to its meaning, they have recited:

*One does not pass the night  
in the aftermath of leaving  
enveloped in the desire to give –  
except a youth still besotted.<sup>771</sup>*

[4:13] *Those are God's bounds. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; that is the great triumph.*

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<sup>771</sup> The translation here follows the version of this verse found in MS K117, 48a. Muṣṭafā gives the same version as well as a variant attributed to al-Buḥṭarī (Muṣṭafā no. 14, p. 106).

His bounds are His commands and prohibitions, and that by which His servants (‘ibād) show their devotion (ta‘abbada bihi). The root of servanthood (‘ubūdiyya) is preserving the bounds and maintaining the promises. Whoever preserves His limit, nothing bad or harmful will reach him. The root of every affliction is going beyond the bounds.

**[4:14] *But whoever disobeys God, and His Messenger; and transgresses His bounds, him He will admit to a Fire, abiding therein, and for him there shall be a humbling chastisement.***

Verily there are two punishments, one immediate and one postponed, and ignominy unites the two of them. If created beings were to strive to bring ignominy to the disobedient with the like of the ignominy which comes to them in committing disobedience, they would not be able to do it. Because of this, their speaker said: Anyone who spends the night committing a sin, he wakes up and has his degradation. But one says of anyone who wakes up performing a pious act, he passes the day and has his dignity.

**[4:15] *As for those of your women who commit lewdness, call four of you to witness against them; and if they witness, then detain them in their houses until death take them or God appoints for them a way.***

Verily He made allowances in proving lewdness, which is fornication, for an excessive amount of witnessing, in order to lower the veil of generosity over the sins of servants. Indeed, the establishment of the act of witnessing in the way in which it exists in the law for proving this situation is like the one who pleads for the defense.

In [the Prophet’s words] (ﷺ) when Mā‘īz ibn Mālik said to him, ‘O Messenger of God, may the blessings of God be upon you, I have fornicated’, he said: **Maybe you kissed?**<sup>772</sup> Other times he said: **Smell his breath.**<sup>773</sup> There is the strongest proof in this of what I have mentioned of the lowering of the veil over ugly acts.

**[4:16] *And when two of you commit it, punish them both; but if they repent and make amends, then leave them be. God ever turns [relenting] and is Merciful.***

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<sup>772</sup> Basyūnī gives a fuller version of this *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī, related from Ibn ‘Abbās: **When Ma’iz ibn Malik came to the Prophet (ﷺ) he said to him, ‘Perhaps you kissed or winked or looked?’** When he said yes only to the question of whether he had fornicated, the Prophet ordered that he be stoned.

<sup>773</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote explaining that this means to determine if he is drunk. Neither he nor ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives a source for this.

The command to different types of punishment for them for that act is the most emphatic expression for repelling and keeping one from it in kindness. Maybe the servant will be wary of that and will therefore not become deserving of the greater punishment.

**[4:17] *The repentance that God accepts is only of those who do evil in ignorance; then repent shortly thereafter; God will relent to those. And God is ever Knowing, Wise.***

There is no asking for forgiveness while one is persisting [in doing evil], for surely repentance without desisting is the trait of liars.

*Evil in ignorance* means doing what the ignorant do.

The sin of each person is in accordance with his state. The sins of the elite are their thoughts that they are entitled to a certain position or special gift by their acts of obedience. This is a weak position since there is no way to Him except through Him.

***Then repent shortly thereafter:*** According to the scholars, this means before death. According to the people of right conduct, it means before your lower self becomes habituated to that so that it becomes its habit. Their speaker said:

*I said to the lower self,*

*‘If you want to return,*

*return before*

*the way is blocked’.*<sup>774</sup>

**[4:18] *Repentance is not for those who do evil deeds until, when death approaches one of them, he says, ‘Indeed now I repent’; neither for those who die disbelieving. Those — We have prepared for them a painful chastisement.***

It means that when the covering has been removed and the different kinds of knowledge have become intuitive and immediate (*darūriyya*),<sup>775</sup> the door of repentance is opened. A condition

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<sup>774</sup> Muṣṭafā states that this verse appears unattributed in *Kitāb al-Kashkūl* (Muṣṭafā, no. 1, p.85).

of the prescriptive command is that faith be hidden. Moreover, when one has become recognized as disloyal on this path, there is no smelling the truth of sincerity after it. When God Most High asked David (‘a) as his crying was subsiding, ‘Why are you crying David? I have already forgiven you. I have placated your opponent and have accepted your repentance’. He said, ‘My God, give me back the moment which was mine’. He said, ‘O David, what an idea! That has passed’.<sup>776</sup> In its meaning, they have recited:

*Let the eyes  
after you weep  
for there is no return  
to the days of joy.<sup>777</sup>*

*[4:19] O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; neither debar them, so that you may go off with part of what you have given them, except when they commit flagrant lewdness. Consort with them in kindness; for if you hate them, it may happen that you hate a thing wherein God has set much good.*

To deceive those who are oppressed and to cheat innocent and gentle Muslims is not praiseworthy before God. Whoever engages in that, God will take revenge on him and will not bless him in what he has taken for himself from people’s wealth through deception and trickery. Whoever deems his adversary insignificant – God will punish him with something more humbling, holding him back from reaching what he hopes for in what he loves.

***Consort with them in kindness:*** i.e. by the teachings of the religion, the adoption of refined behavior through the ethics of those who submit, and beautiful companionship in spite of the dislikes of the lower self. It is that you tolerate any offense on their part while not making them bear the burden of servicing you, and that you shut your eyes to the occasions of their embarrassment.<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> ‘*Ilm ḍarūriyya*’ literally means ‘necessary knowledge’.

<sup>776</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.48b here. The Basyūnī edition reads, ‘That is a wish that has passed’.

<sup>777</sup> Muṣṭafā gives a slightly different version of this verse from al-Qushayrī’s *Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Muṣṭafā, no. 6, p. 77).

<sup>778</sup> In the Basyūnī edition, the ‘you’ in this sentence is the Arabic masculine plural (which can include both men and women) while the words ‘they’ or ‘their’ are the feminine plural pronoun. The MS K117, f.48b uses the masculine plural for both.

***For if you hate them, it may happen that you hate a thing...:*** The end result of everything which is the most difficult for your lower self is more gratifying and chivalrous. Know that the Real (s) has not shown anyone His Unseen and the good of most of that which mankind feels aversion to may be more perfect. God (s) has decreed that opposing the lower self will bring its possessor to a higher station, while the reverse will be the case for those who make themselves harmonious with it. Similarly, opposition to the heart<sup>779</sup> necessarily brings about blindness in the faculty of insight, while the reverse will be the case for those who make themselves harmonious with it.

***[4:20] And if you desire to exchange a wife in place of another, and you have given to one a hundredweight, take of it nothing. Would you take it by way of calumny and manifest sin?***

He taught them the beauty of the promise and the attribute of nobility and kindness (*karam*) with regards to the conjugal relationship, saying ‘Do not combine the act of separation and demanding your wealth back from her, for surely that is ignoble. If you have given a woman a great deal of wealth and then treat her harshly by separating from her, what you have given her is insignificant next to what you have made her experience.

***[4:21] How shall you take it...<sup>780</sup>***

It means that the prior companionship has a firm inviolability, so stop out of respect to the pact and keep to what has been required in the covenant.

***[4:22] And do not marry women whom your fathers married, unless it be a thing of the past; surely that is obscene and abominable, an evil way.***

The verse alludes to the preservation of the pact and holding to the boundary of respect. Surely the sincere female companion disdains to take another into his bed, and the sons are prohibited from ignoring the rights of their fathers in seeking to be the father’s wife.

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<sup>779</sup> The Basyūnī edition uses the plural ‘hearts’ (*qulūb*) here, but the translation follows the singular found in MS K117, f.48b since it agrees with the singular ‘lower self’ (*nafs*) in the previous sentence.

<sup>780</sup> The entire verse reads: *How shall you take it, when each of you has been privily with the other,*

*and they have taken from you a solemn covenant.*



[4:23] *Forbidden to you are your mothers, and daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts, and maternal aunts, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your foster mothers who have given you milk, your foster sisters, your mothers-in-law, your step-daughters, who are in your care being born of your wives you have been in to — but if you have not yet been in to them you are not at fault — and the spouses of your sons who are of your loins, and that you should take to you two sisters together unless it be a thing of the past. God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

To endeavor to find the intrinsic meanings behind the prohibitions is an impossible matter because the law does not need to be shown as having a cause (*ghayr al-mu'allal*). Instead, the Real (s) prohibits what He wills for whom He wills, and likewise gives permission. There is no underlying cause (‘*illa*) for the laws at all: if the prohibited women were to be the permissible ones or the permissible women were to be the prohibited ones, it would be allowable.

[4:24] *And wedded women, save what your right hands own, this is what God has prescribed for you. Lawful for you beyond all that is that you seek using your wealth, in wedlock and not in illicitly. Such wives as you enjoy thereby, give them their wages as an obligation; you are not at fault in agreeing together, after the obligation. God is ever Knowing, Wise.*

When you stay mindful of the limits, respect agreements and obtain mutual consent with women<sup>781</sup> according to the law, there will be no enmity in it for people and no punishment to follow from it from the Real (s), for that is lawful and without further restriction.

[4:25] *And whoever has not the means wherewith to be able to marry believing women in wedlock, let him take believing maids whom your right hands own. God knows very well your faith; the one of you is as the other. So marry them, with the permission of their folk, and give them their wages, honorably, as women in wedlock, not illicitly, or taking lovers. But when they are given in wedlock, if they commit lewdness, they shall be liable to half the chastisement, of married women. That is for those of you who fear the distress of sin, yet it is better for you to be patient. God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Concessions have been granted for the weak. As for the strong, He bids them to serious endeavor, and the adoption of prudence and restraint, since there is no work for them except the concern for the right of the Real (*haqq al-haqq*). When an external matter distracts [the seekers] from watching over their hearts, then the adoption of what is easy in external matters and what is less becomes more natural than investigating what keeps one from watching over the innermost self – because that is the abandonment of some affairs for what is more

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<sup>781</sup> The MS K117, f.49a has ‘people’ (*nās*) here rather than ‘women’ (*nisā*).

important and sublime. So whoever has descended in degree from adopting that which is strongest and most comprehensive, the permissible for him becomes a decline into a state of indulgence.<sup>782</sup>

Then He said at the end of the verse: *yet it is better for you to be patient*. It means enduring what is difficult in it and in this is a kind of sympathetic disposition to the servant since He did not say, 'Be patient', but rather *yet it is better for you to be patient*.

**[4:26] *God desires to make clear to you and to guide you in the ways of those before you, and to turn [in forgiveness] towards you; God is Knowing, Wise.***

When the Prophet (ﷺ) informed his community of the stories of those from past communities and what they did and how they were dealt with, they looked to what would be done with them since there were also among them those who did the impermissible. So they said, 'If only we knew in what way he will deal with us. Will it be abasement, metamorphosis,<sup>783</sup> punishment or what?' So God Most High said: *and to guide you in the ways of those before you*, We will inform you of that which we did with them.

*And to turn [in forgiveness] toward you*: as for you, I turn [in forgiveness] to you. As for those who came before you, I have already destroyed them.

It is said *God desires to make clear to you* by unveiling His secrets to you so that what was hidden from others will be made manifest to you.

It is said *God desires to make clear to you* His singularity in bringing things into existence and originating new things, and that there is no one like Him.

*And to guide you in the ways of those before you*: the path of the prophets and friends, which is entrusting [everything to God], equanimity, and complete submission to the [divine] decree and judgment.

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<sup>782</sup> Basyūnī's adds a footnote referring to a passage from al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* in 'The Section on Advice for Aspirants' (*bāb al-waṣīyya li'l-murīdīn*) which stresses the importance for aspirants of staying with the highest standards of behavior (2: 735; Knysh translation p. 405).

<sup>783</sup> See al-Qushayrī's commentary on 2:65: *And verily you know that among you who transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them, 'Be apes despised!'*

It is said: *and to turn [in forgiveness] toward you.* i.e. He accepts your repentance after having created it, and then repays you according to what He has created for you in your repentance.

[4:27-28] *And God desires to turn [forgivingly] towards you, but those who follow their passions, desire that you deviate with a terrible deviation. \* God desires to lighten things for you; for man was created weak.*

He set apart in this account the account of those who came first and those who come last. When God desires to turn towards someone, He will not let an enemy gloat over him and He will not give him anything bad in either world.

*But those who follow their passions...:* Their desire is inverted and is lost and rejected before the desire of the Real (s).

*God desires to lighten things for you.* It means the weight of litanies<sup>784</sup> by the interruptions of the incomings<sup>785</sup> to your hearts. It is said that God desires to lighten the enduring of difficult efforts by what enters your hearts from the lights of witnessings.

It is said God desires to lighten the burdens of service for you with the sweetness of acts of obedience.

It is said He lightens the difficulties of the trust for you by carrying its burden for you.<sup>786</sup>

It is said He lightens the hardships of seeking by ease of arriving.

*For man was created weak:* By this He describes their poverty and adversity but does not accept by these their excuse.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> The translation follows MS K117, f.49a here with the word ‘litanies’ (*awrād*) rather than the word ‘burdens’ (*awzār*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>785</sup> The translation follows the word ‘incomings’ (*wāridāt*) from MS K117, f.49a rather than the word ‘litanies’ (*awrād*) in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>786</sup> The reference here is to Qur’ānic verse 33:72: *Indeed We offered the Trust (amāna) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook it. Truly he is a wrongdoer, ignorant.*

<sup>787</sup> The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in here with *lam yabsuṭ* from MS K117, 49a.

[4:29-4:30] *O you who believe, consume not your goods between you wrongly, except it be trading through mutual agreement. And kill not yourselves. Surely God is ever Merciful to you. \* And whoever does that through aggression and injustice, him We shall certainly expose to a fire; and that for God is an easy matter.*

Every thing spent for something other than God is a good spent wrongly. It is said it is being withholding when that is done in an unthinking way and spending when that is not done from a place of witnessing True Reality (*haqīqa*). All of that is wrong.

*And kill not yourselves*, meaning by committing sins. It is said its oblique reference is to that which incurs His wrath (*s*).<sup>788</sup> It is said [it means] by your contemplating [these acts] and considering them.

*And whoever does that through aggression and injustice*, We will not release him from a fierce punishment. We will entrust [the fire's] inhabitant to it and give it free rein.

[4:31] *If you avoid the grave sins that are forbidden you, We will absolve you of your evil deeds and admit you by an honorable gate.*

The grave sins here, in scholarly terms, are those of polytheism. According to the explanation of allusion, they [also] include acts of hidden polytheism. In that group is paying heed to creatures, seeking the pleasure of their acceptance, courting their affection, and shutting one's eyes to the right and reality (*haqq*) of God because of them.

It is said that when one has committed to the covenant, one is kept from being charged with disbelief in one's transgressions.<sup>789</sup>

It is said the worst of the grave sins is your affirmation of your self. When you have experienced its negation you will be delivered from the captivity of tribulations. *We will admit you* in your affairs *by an honorable gate*, a beautiful admission. You will no longer see your comings and goings as coming from yourselves but rather you will see the One who has free disposal over your affairs.

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<sup>788</sup> In other words, 'do not destroy yourselves through behaviors that will bring God's wrath upon you'.

<sup>789</sup> In other words, as long as one holds to the covenant of declaring God's oneness, lesser transgressions do not make one a disbeliever.

**[4:32] *Do not covet that in which God has preferred some of you above others. To men a share from what they have earned and to women a share from what they have earned. And ask God of His bounty; God is ever Knower of all things.***

In the language of right conduct, the command is to toil, not covet. In the language of declaring God's unity, the command is to the [divine] decree and judgment, not desire and wants. It is said, 'Travel the road of those who came before you in your concern for the right of God. Do not ask to obtain what they were selected for from the favor of God. Concern yourselves with the right of your Master, not with following your whims and choosing what you want'.

It is said, 'Do not covet the station of lords without traveling their paths, cleaving to their course, and doing what they do, for that is a distorted way of thinking'.

It is said, 'Be a seeker of His rights, not a seeker of your portion or your right. If you start seeking what you wish for yourself, you have unconsciously added partners to your profession of God's unity'.

It is said, 'Do not covet stations of men, for each has a station appropriate before God'. They are counted out so that until someone has died, his place will not be inherited by another. God Most High said: *He has made you successors* (6:165; 10:14; 10:73; 35:39) and the successor is the one who succeeds from those who came before him. If you covet the station of one of the friends, it is as if you are seeking to hasten his passing in all or in part of what you covet, and that is injurious.

It is said your extinction beneath the course of His decree according to what has already been established by His choosing is more fortunate for you than looking to obtain your desires since your ruin may lie in the object of your desire.

It is said whoever's outward nature has not been educated in the different kinds of right conduct, his inward nature has not been refined by the different kinds of waystations. So he should not attempt to obtain intimate communications – that would be preposterous!

***And ask God of His bounty:*** The distinction between coveting and asking for His bounty has several aspects: Coveting something is accompanied by your heedlessness of your Lord, so you covet in your heart the existence of that thing without anticipating it from God. But when

you ask God, it is impossible for you not to remember Him. Another [sense of the verse] is when the questioner does not see his own worthiness. The sincerity of desire causes him to implore and beseech. The one who covets is not in this group. Another [sense of the verse] is that God prohibits coveting that in which God has preferred others to you, since its meaning would be that He takes what He has given your companion and gives it to you. But He allows you to ask of His bounty in giving you the like of what He gave your companion.

It is said, ‘Do not covet the gift but ask God to give you contentment from His bounty in not receiving the gift. That is more perfect than the gift, for surely emancipation from the bondage of things is better than owning them.

**[4:33] *To each We have appointed heirs (mawālī) of that which parents and kinsmen leave and to those to whom your right hands were pledged. So give them their share. God is ever Witness over everything.***

In the beginning of Islam, He appointed the head of the family in the contractual arrangements determining inheritance, but then the decree of inheritance<sup>790</sup> was abrogated while the decree of respect remained.<sup>791</sup> If this was the manner of making contracts between men, what do you think of making contracts with God? God Most High said: *men who are true to the covenant they made with God* [33:23]. They have recited:

*Verily those who have died  
to the religion of whims  
have found the decree of death  
a sweet watering place.*<sup>792</sup>

**[4:34] *Men are in charge of women because of that with which God has preferred the one over the other, and because of what they expend of their property. Therefore righteous women are obedient, guarding in the unseen because of what God has guarded. And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish them, and share not beds with them, and strike them. If they then obey you, do not seek a way against them. God is ever High, Great.***

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<sup>790</sup> That is, as determined in this manner. Al-Qushayrī seems to be referring here to the change in inheritance practices from a distribution determined by the head of a family to the system of obligatory shares with guaranteed percentages to spouses and certain relatives.

<sup>791</sup> If the head of the family no longer has this authority over inheritance, respect to them is still due.

<sup>792</sup> Muṣṭafā cites a slightly different version of this verse attributed to ‘Amr b. Qinān (?) (Muṣṭafā, no. 2, p.92).

He singled out men for strength and then increased their burden, for the burden is in accordance with the strength. The admonition is for hearts and aspirations, not for the lower selves and bodies.<sup>793</sup>

***And those you fear may be rebellious, admonish them, and share not beds with them, and strike them:*** i.e. increase your correction of them gradually and with kindness, for if the matter can be reconciled with admonition there is no need to use the rod to strike. The verse contains the good manners of spousal companionship.

Then He said: ***If they then obey you, do not seek a way against them.*** It means if she stops acting in a way that is injurious to the relationship and returns to obedience, do not seek revenge on her for what has happened in the past and do not hold back from accepting her excuse or be unyielding towards her.

It is said ***do not seek a way against them*** in going beyond the measure of what you deem necessary in your punishment.

***[4:35] And if you fear a breach between the two, send forth an arbiter from his folk, and an arbiter from her folk, if they desire to set things right, God will grant them success. Surely God is ever Knower, Aware.***

It is said you have the right to her obedience in terms of the body but as for love and inclination towards you in the heart, that is up to God. So do not burden her with what God has not provided for her for hearts are in the power of God and He makes to love whom He will and makes to hate whom He will.

It is said ***if they then obey you, do not seek a way against them***, i.e. do not forget her loyalty in the past because of single incident of antipathy in the present, for perhaps things will become amicable again.

***[4:36-4:37] And worship God, and associate nothing with Him. Be kind to parents, and near kindred, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is near, and to the neighbor who is a stranger, and to the friend at your side, and to the wayfarer, and to what your right hands own. Surely God loves not the conceited, and the boastful. \* Those who are niggardly, and bid other people to be niggardly, and conceal what God has bestowed***

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<sup>793</sup> Al-Qushayrī would seem to be suggesting that this Qur'ānic verse is directed towards the finer sensibilities of being human rather than the outward aspects of patriarchal control.

*upon them of His bounty. And We have prepared for those that disbelieve a humbling chastisement.*

**And worship God:** Servanthood is attaching yourself closely to the command and separating yourself from the rebuke.

**And associate nothing with Him:** The outwardly apparent form of associating another reality with God is to believe in objects of worship other than Him, while its hidden form is looking to any existing thing other than Him. Declaring His unity is to recognize that all contingent things are brought into being by God and subsist through Him. He is the One who causes things to happen, brings things forth and causes them to remain. There is not an atom, a splinter, a *sīna* or the slightest trace belonging to anyone in the bringing forth of things into existence or originating new things.

The subtle forms of showing off, the hidden acts of guile, the secret places of pride, the doing of things in consideration of created beings, the seeking of the pleasure of their praise and wilting at their rejection and censure – all that is the hidden polytheism.

**Be kind to parents:** To act with kindness towards parents is to foster companionship. Surely you have been commanded to [observe] their rights first because they are your kin, and you were raised by them, and reached your full maturity and knowledge through them. When your association and companionship have become sound and good with your near kindred, the poor, the needy, the orphans and those of their class, you will be raised up from that to becoming worthy of His companionship (s).

**And to the neighbor who is near, and to the neighbor who is a stranger:** Among your neighbors are your two angels,<sup>794</sup> so do not annoy them with your disobedience and observe their right in what you give them to record with your acts of kindness.<sup>795</sup>

If the neighbor to your home is entitled to your kindness and the observation of his right, then the neighbor to your self, which is your heart, deserves even more that you do not neglect or disregard it, and that you do not enable vile thoughts to come to it. And if the neighbor of this self of yours is His decree, then the neighbor of your heart, which is your spirit, deserves even

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<sup>794</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition here, which has been completed with ‘your two angels’ (*malakāka*) from MS 117, 50a. The word *tūlī* has been replaced with *tumlī* from the latter.

<sup>795</sup> Al-Qushayrī would seem to be referring to Qur’ānic verses 50:17-18 here, which are sometimes interpreted as referring to angels: *When the two Receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left, he does not utter a word but that there is beside him a watcher, [who is] ready.*



more that you protect its right and do not enable that which will oppose it from its familiar comforts and close things. The neighbor of your spirit, which is your innermost self, deserves even more that you watch over its right and do not enable its absence from the homesteads of witnessing at all times. His words: *And He is with you wherever you are* [57:4]. The allusion from it is unambiguous to the hearts of those who possess realization.

***Those who are niggardly...***: According to the scholarly discourse, niggardliness is holding back from the obligatory. According to the explanation of the allusion, it is to not prefer others (*īthār*) in times of need. Bidding others to niggardliness is keeping them from the demands of realities by showing sympathy for them with regards to the law. According to the explanation of this, there is a stripping away of attachments and cutting off of what is beyond the necessary for a traveler,<sup>796</sup> but someone advises him, saying, ‘Maybe you are not strong enough for this, and indeed, in spite of what is known to you of the permitted, you may be better off becoming a beggar. Maybe you should go out and ask from others. That would not be a burden on other Muslims’. And he relates examples of this for him on this topic from the reports and traditions. If it were not for the niggardliness hidden in his heart, he would assist him in his aspiration in that which comes to his heart instead of holding back from him that which must be said by way of counsel. One who is like this quickly becomes despicable inasmuch as he has extinguished the sparks of desire of this poor soul through what he thinks is advice and sympathy regarding the law.

***And conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty***, i.e. if God has made them free of seeking bounty in what He has granted and given them, they conceal that, coveting more without warrant.

It is said ***they conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty*** when an aspirant comes before them, asking for something in which would be his salvation, they are stingy in giving guidance to him on it.

It is said the niggardliness of the rich is holding back wealth and the niggardliness of the poor is holding back the aspiration.

[4:38] ***And those who expend of their substance to show off to people, and believe not in God and the Last Day. Whoever has Satan for a comrade, then an evil comrade has he.***

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<sup>796</sup> The translation follows the word ‘for a traveler’ (*li-sālik*) from MS 117, 50a rather than *bi-lisānik* from the Basyūnī edition.

These are also included in His words: *Surely God loves not the conceited, and the boastful (fakhūr) [4:36].* Their immediate punishment is that they are not in the group of those He loves and that is tribulation enough.

The conceited are those who look to themselves while those who show off look to others like them. Both of them are branded by hidden polytheism and God does not love those who associate other realities with Him. Among camels, the *fakhūr* is she-camel in the flock whose teats are blocked so that a large amount of milk collects in the [udder]. The buyer thinks that that is normal for her but it is not so.<sup>797</sup> Likewise, anyone who looks only to himself and his standing in the present moment is making false claims; he is *fakhūr* and God does not love him. This is also the case for the one who expends his substance to show off to people.

***[4:39] And what burden is on them if they were to believe in God and the Last Day, and expend of what God has provided them? God is ever Aware of them.***

There is no difficulty in their belief in God for them. Indeed, if they were to believe, they would attain glory in this world and the Hereafter. Only a lack of fidelity and respect causes them to turn away from Him.

***[4:40] Surely God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an atom; and if it be a good deed, He will double it and give from Himself a great wage.***

He does not deprive them of anything in their reward, but rather is first with his bounty for them, without them being deserving, and He doubles the wages for their works. As for wrongdoing, it is impossible to describe His decree this way because the creation is His creation and the kingdom is His kingdom. The wrongdoer is one who transgresses a limit which has been prescribed for him. This would be an impossible way to describe His might in the glory of His measure.

***[4:41-4:42] So how shall it be when We bring forward from every community a witness; and We bring you as witness against these? \* Upon that day, the disbelievers, those who have disobeyed the Messenger, will wish that the earth might be leveled with them. And they will not hide from God any talk.***

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<sup>797</sup> In other words, the she-camel looks as if she will give a lot of milk, but is actually able to give very little.

When the Messenger (ﷺ) will be the witness against his community, he will be their intercessor. He will only bear witness for that which is an appropriate matter of theirs for intercession.

***Upon that day, the disbelievers...:*** They will become remorseful but it will not benefit them. They will bite their fingertips but their anguish will not subside. They will be wrapped in the veil of ignominy and transferred to the homesteads of tribulation and adversity.

***[4:43] O you who believe, draw not near to prayer, whilst you are inebriated, until you know what you are saying, nor whilst you are defiled, unless you are traversing a way, until you have washed yourselves. But if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women; and you can find no water, wholesome soil, and wipe your faces and your hands. God is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.***

The prohibition against drinks which cause intoxication is not [a prohibition] from prayer. That is to say you should not come to prayer when you are inebriated, so you should avoid drinking that which will intoxicate you. Moreover, when you come to prayer in that condition, the prayer will not be accepted from you.

Intoxication is the loss of mental functioning and awareness, and with it intimate conversation with the Real is not appropriate. The one who is praying speaks intimately with his Lord, so anything which causes the heart to be unmindful of God is included in this by way of allusion and for this reason becomes part of this category. Intoxication is of several types: there is intoxication by wine and intoxication from the heedlessness that comes from being overcome by love for the present world. The most difficult intoxication is your intoxication with your lower self, and it is that which plunges you into separation from Him. If someone is intoxicated from wine, the end of his affair is burning if he is not forgiven. Someone who is intoxicated with himself, his state is separation in the moment from reality. As for the intoxication which the folk allude to, its possessor has his moment protected from it so that he may pray and the matter will be made easy for him. Then when he leaves prayer, it overwhelms him and seizes him [again]. [The intoxication of] those who are not protected in the precepts of the law is mixed with worldly concern.

***Nor whilst you are defiled, unless you are traversing a way:*** He gives permission to those who are compelled to take liberties when crossing through the place of prayer in the state of major ritual impurity, but if one deviates more than is necessary, than one deserves reproof without being excused. It is similar in what occurs with excuses for the time in which obligations are to be performed, and the lifting of the requirement for the performer of the action.

Then verily He (s), by His grace, appointed using clean earth as a substitute for water when there is a lack of it. Similarly, the descent to the plains of separation after reaching the summit of gathering, to the extent which occurs from weakness, is a substitute for the people of realities. And surely the use of clean earth is a substitute for water which is easier to find and of less use in its original form, while the demands made on those who are drawn closer will be more difficult. In the outward sense [of the verse], we are commanded to use earth and in the inward sense to the experience of humility and to perpetual change. Make the act of using earth a diminution and observe in it a protection for your head from the earth and for your feet, for surely glory in the believer – and his Master in deserving Majesty – is more appropriate than the ignominy of his bankrupt state. The bankruptcy of man's works requires his being humble while his knowledge of the Majesty of his Chief causes every kind of being glorified and adorned.

[4:44-4:46] *Have you not seen those who were given a share of the Book, purchasing*

*error and desiring that you should err from the way? \* God has better knowledge of your enemies. God suffices as a Protector, God suffices as a Helper. \* Some from among the Jews distort the words from their contexts and they say, 'We have heard, and we disobey, and hear as one who does not hear' and, 'Mind us', twisting with their tongues and slandering religion. If they had said, 'We have heard and obey', and 'Hear', and 'Consider us,', it would have been better for them and more upright, but God has cursed them for their unbelief, so they believe not except a few.*

They practiced a deception but did not realize the way in which He deceived them in that they were given the book and then were deprived of the blessing of understanding so that they distorted [the words] and persisted.

*Some from among the Jews...:* They acted shamelessly towards the Messenger (s) and refused to show him respect so they were punished with doubt concerning his affair, for no one can neglect acting with respect before one who deserves respect without placing a barrier between himself and the obtaining of the blessing of his companionship and the bounties of serving him. If they had hastened to reject the envy they felt and accepted his state with veneration and honoring, they would have found blessing in following him and they would have found happiness in both abodes. How could they be otherwise when prior determinations distanced them and fate kept them back from the carpet of service? Surely those whom the decrees caused to stay were not moved by the use of deceit.

[4:47] *O you who have been given the Scripture, believe in what We have revealed, confirming what is with you before We obliterate faces, and turn them inside out or curse them as We cursed those of the Sabbath, and God's command is done.*

The turning back of the hearts from spiritual desire to the states of the people of habit even as His calls were ample to reject the present world, they were once again unable to endure its gathering or preventing.

**[4:48] *God forgives not that anything should be associated with Him. But He forgives other than that to whomever He wills. Whoever associates anything with God, then he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.***

Ordinary people have been asked to abandon the outward association of anything with Him, while the elect have been asked to abandon hidden associating. Those who seek access to Him by their action and think that it is from them, or imagine that His decrees (s) are caused by their movements and lack of movements, or pay heed to a created thing or look to themselves, then their home territory is associating other things with Him according to the people of realities.

***God forgives not that anything should be associated with Him.*** Anyone who imagines that his opposition will obtain anything other than what He has ordained is also included among them.

**[4:49-4:50] *Have you not seen those who praise themselves for purity? Nay, God purifies whom He will, and they shall not be wronged, a single date-thread. \* Consider how they invent falsehood against God, and that suffices for a clear sin.***

Anyone who relies on the pronouncement of others of his purity, or seeks the satisfaction of the elite over that of ordinary people, is someone who praises himself for purity, and looking to the self is the greatest veil. Anyone who imagines that by his taking on of burdens has purified himself by his litanies or his effort or his movements or lack of movements, his is veiled by his own ignorance.

***Consider how they invent...***: The allusion is to those who let loose their tongues claiming what they have not actualized. The one who invents in his speaking in this matter does not say anything without ears rejecting him and hearts being driving away. When he becomes silent, his returns to a ruined heart.

**[4:51-4:52] *Have you not seen those who were given a share of the Book, how they believe in al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt, and say to the disbelievers, ‘These are more rightly guided than the believers’? \* Those are the ones whom God has cursed; and he whom God has cursed,***

*you will never find for him any helper.*

The *ṭāghūt* of each person is his lower self and his whim, and the idol he seeks among that which is other than Him. When someone pays heed to a person, or looks to a reason, or turns to a cause, or obeys a whim, that thing is his *jibt* and his *ṭāghūt*.<sup>798</sup> The companions of al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt deserve the curse, which is being expelled from the carpet of service and veiled from witnessing lordship.

[4:53-4:55] *Or have they a share in the Kingdom?, then they would not give the*

*people a single date-spot. \* Or, are they jealous of people for the bounty that God has bestowed upon them. For We gave the House of Abraham the Book and wisdom, and We gave them a mighty kingdom. \* And there are some of them who believe in him and some of them who bar from him. Hell suffices for a blaze.*

Those who are naturally disposed to greed and niggardliness never receive more themselves without lamenting the hand men stretch out to them, which is like someone drinking water drop by drop yet he gulps down the water of his own life.

*Or, are they jealous of people....*: nay, they reject the Real's (*s*) choosing whom He wills for His friends out of their jealousy, and they do not approach them with reverence, but the way of God (*s*) with His friends has come to pass with honor and increase for [the friends]. The disbelievers have stuck to the course of doubting the divine ordinance, but there are some who believe in him and some who reject and deny that. The punishment of God is sufficient as an avenger of them.

*And We gave them a mighty kingdom*: The mighty kingdom is knowledge of the King. It is said it is the dominion over the lower self.

It is said it is the elevated viewpoint over the secrets of the kingdom so that nothing is hidden from him.

It is said it is the viewing of the secrets of creation.

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<sup>798</sup> Al-Ṭāghūt and al-Jibt are said to be either idols belonging to Quraysh tribe in the time of the Prophet, devils, enchanters, or anything which is worshipped instead of God (Lane, 1:373 and 2:1857).

[4:56] *Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs — We shall expose them to a Fire; as often as their skins are consumed, We shall replace them with other skins, that they may taste the chastisement. Surely God is ever Mighty, Wise.*

The allusion from it is to those who deny the signs of the friends. He causes them to abide in a state of insignificance and causes them to remain the alienation of denial. Whenever something appears to their hearts from this story,<sup>799</sup> their rejection leads them to abandon faith in it and to feel contempt for its people as a way of seeking distance, so they are punished over and over again.

[4:57] *And those that believe, and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide: they shall have therein spouses purified, and We shall admit them to plenteous shade.*

Today they are in the shade of being cared for and tomorrow in the shade of protection and sufficiency. Rather, they are in the shade of solicitude in this world and the next. People in this group<sup>800</sup> are of different types: There are those who are in the shade of His mercy, those who are in the shade of His care, those who are in the shade of His special generosity, those who are in the shade of His solicitude, and those who are in the shade of His nearness.

[4:58] *Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition God gives you. God is ever Hearer, Seer.*

To return trusts to their people is to hand over the states<sup>801</sup> of created beings to them after you having watched over them so that you do not act in a corrupt manner with [the people]. It is said God (*swt*) deposited trusts with you, so returning the trust to its people is handing it over to God (*s*), secure from any breach of faith on your part regarding it. Faithlessness in the trust of the heart is your making claims with regard to it and faithlessness in the trust of your innermost self is your paying it heed [rather than God].

To judge between people with justice is to treat the near and distance equally in giving and expending, and [it is also] that you do not allow pervasive resentment to lead you to take revenge on any soul.

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<sup>799</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote saying what is intended by ‘the story’ is Sufism and its followers.

<sup>800</sup> The translation follows ‘group’ (*jumla*) from MS 117, f.51a rather than ‘present world’ (*dunyā*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>801</sup> Basyūnī changes ‘states’ (*aḥwāl*) to ‘goods’ (*amwāl*) since he says states cannot be held as deposits for people. However the word ‘states’ is also found in MS K117, f.51b, so it remains in this translation.

[4:59] *O you who believe, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you believe in God and the Last Day; that is better and more excellent in interpretation.*

He compares obedience to Him with obedience to the Messenger (s), an honoring of his affair and an elevation of his status. **Those in authority (ūlū al-amr)**, in the language of scholarly knowledge, is the prevailing ruler (sulṭān). According to the explanation of deeper knowledge (ma'rifa), the one who has deeper knowledge ('ārif) is the possessor of authority (dhū'l-amr) over the one who is just starting out, and the shaykh is the possessor of authority over the aspirant, and the imam of each group is the possessor of authority over them.

It is said the friend and governor (walī) of the aspirant is more worthy (awlā)<sup>802</sup> than the aspirant than the aspirant is for the aspirant.

***If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God:*** In the language of scholarly knowledge, this means the Book and the Sunna. According to the explanation of declaring God's unity, it is to commit and entrust knowledge of it to God (s). When two thoughts are in disagreement in the heart of the believer, then if he has the effort of scholars, he contemplates what comes to his mind through that which this understanding points to. A master of a heart entrusts that to the Real (s) and observes what is addressed to him in its inner secrets and cast into his heart without any intermediary.

[4:60] *Have you not seen those who claim that they believe in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, desiring to take their disputes to a false deity when they have been commanded to renounce him? But Satan desires to mislead them, far astray.*

Outwardly they proclaimed sincerity but secretly they acted hypocritically. He (s) exposed them through the tongue of Gabriel ('a), saying: ***desiring to take their disputes to a false deity when they have been commanded to renounce him***, i.e. reject him. Those who stray from His path and return to another master deserve disappointment and blame.

[4:61] *And when it is said to them, 'Come to what God has revealed and the Messenger', you see the hypocrites turn away from you vehemently.*

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<sup>802</sup> Awlā is the comparative adjective for walī.



Everything other than the word of the Real is easy for the hypocrites [to hear], but only the sincere hear the words of His unity. Those who are listless and those who are hostile do not hear that which is the real, because opposing whim is difficult for those who are not sincere. Just as the sight of the bat<sup>803</sup> is incapable of facing the sun, the hypocrites were unable to be stand firm before [the Prophet] (ﷺ) and that was their vehemently turning away.

**[4:62] *How would it be when an affliction befalls them for what their own hands have sent before them! They then come to you, swearing by God that, ‘We sought only virtue and harmony’.***

The beseeching of the insincere at the attacks of misfortune is not firmly rooted. It deserves no consideration because it only lasts until the tribulation has passed. The greater affliction [is being indifferent to your own shortcomings].<sup>804</sup>

It is said part of the affliction is that your moment effaces you in what is not useful to you.<sup>805</sup>

**[4:63] *Those — God knows what is in their hearts; so turn away from them, and admonish them, and say to them regarding their souls penetrating words.***

Be generous with them in admonition as sympathy for them requires, but hold your heart back from being overly concerned for them or relying on them. Know that you will not be able to help in anyway those who We do not support.

**[4:64] *We never sent any Messenger, but that he should be obeyed by the leave of God. If, when they had wronged themselves, they had come to you, and asked forgiveness from God, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God Relenting, Merciful.***

We only commanded the messengers to invite created beings to Us.

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<sup>803</sup> The translation follows ‘bat’ (*khuffāsh*) here from MS K117, f.51b rather than ‘created beings’ (*khalq*) from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>804</sup> What is between the brackets is a correction and addition Basyūnī made of what he calls an obscure place in the text. Basyūnī’s words draw upon a passage from al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* in the section on ‘The Moment’ (*al-waqt*) (vol. 1, p....; Knysh translation p. 76). The MS K117, f.51b reads, ‘The greater affliction is indifference to the affliction’.

<sup>805</sup> In his footnote to this sentence, Basyūnī again turns to the section on ‘The Moment’ from the *Risāla*, quoting al-Qushayrī: Among their sayings about the moment is, ‘The moment is a file which grinds you but does not efface you’ and ‘The moment is a sword. Just as the sword cuts, the moment is in what the Real has brought to pass and caused to prevail’ (vol. 1, p....; Knysh translation, p. 76).

*If, when they had wronged themselves, they had come to you:* if they had made you their means to reach Us, and it is said, if they had kept to humility and becoming poor, and had ridden the mount of asking forgiveness, they would have come to rest in the courtyard of kindnesses.

[4:65] *But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you judge over what has broken out between them and find in themselves no inhibition regarding what you decide, but submit in full submission.*

He has blocked the path to Himself completely unless there is faith in Muḥammad (ṣ). Those who do not walk under his banner have no soul belonging to them from God. Therefore He has made one of the conditions of faith the complete removal of oppositional tendencies in your heart.

*And find [in themselves no inhibition]...:* you must meet<sup>806</sup> situations laughing, just as someone said:

*If a beloved is unfair to me*

*I am fair to him.*

*I gulp down for him the most bitter*

*and give him what is sweet to drink.*

*If he says to me,*

*'It's over',*

*I choose equanimity,*

*not difficulty.*<sup>807</sup>

[4:66-4:68] *And had We prescribed for them: 'Slay yourselves' or 'Leave your habitations', they would not have done it, save a few of them; yet if they had done what they were admonished to do, it would have been better for them, and stronger in establishing. \* And*

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<sup>806</sup> The blank in Basyūnī here has been completed with *talqā* from MS K117, f.51b.

<sup>807</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate these verses in any other source (no. 3, p. 80-1).

*then, We would have surely given them from Us a great wage. \* And We would have guided them to a straight path.*

God told of the weakness of their sincerity and the strength of their bankruptcy, and then, by His knowledge, of their deficiency. He left them alone in most of the tests but then said, ‘If they had been inclined to serve and had put on the belt of obedience, that would have been better for them than their persisting in their disbelief and pride. If they had done that, We would have given them a great reward from Us, and would have guided them on a straight path, and rendered them an enduring gift.

The affair, in the explanation of the allusion, refers to opposition to whim and the sacrifice of lower selves by holding them back from comfortable things, leaving the dwellings and parting from the familiar territories of desire for the present world.

*[4:69-4:70] Whoever obeys God and the Messenger, they are with those whom God has blessed of the prophets and the truthful, and the martyrs, and the righteous. What fine companions they are! \* That is bounty from God. God suffices as Knower.*

He made obedience to Al-Muṣṭafā (ṣ)<sup>808</sup> the keys to attaining the stations of the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs in the manner which is appropriate for the community and that suffices for him (‘a) as an honor.

*That is bounty from God:* He detached their station from every cause, merit, and tie, for surely what comes to them is and happens to them is the disbursement of His bounty and originates from His generosity.

*[4:71-4:73] O you who believe, take your precautions, then move forward in companies, or move forward all together. \* Verily, there are some of you who tarry; then, if an affliction befalls you, he says, ‘God has been gracious to me, for I was not a witness with them’. \* But if a bounty from God befalls you, he will surely cry as if there had never been any affection between you and him: ‘Oh, would that I had been with them, so that I might have won a great triumph!’*

Fleeing (*firār*) towards God is among the attributes of those who seek. Fleeing with God is among the attributes of those who arrive. Rest (*qarār*) with God cannot be found except by

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<sup>808</sup> ‘The Chosen One’, an epithet of Muḥammad.

those who are sincere in fleeing to God. Fleeing from everything else is the business of every one who declares His unity.

***Verily, there are some of you who tarry:*** i.e., their beliefs are not firmly established in one state. They are tied to worldly concerns, so when they see something unpleasant approaching the Muslims, they are grateful and say, ‘Praise be to God who has protected us from following them and afflicting us with what He has afflicted them’. But if you have a blessing or something good, they incline towards you and wish that they had been with you. They have lost in the present world and the Hereafter, not fully<sup>809</sup> unbelieving and not sincerely believing.

***As if there had never been any affection between you and him:*** It means they have cast off the protection of life and did not respect your inviolability [with regards to life and property].<sup>810</sup>

***[4:74] So let them fight in the way of God those who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of God and is slain or conquers, We shall give him a great wage.***

One who has not slain his lower self within himself, his jihad through himself is not sound. First, there must be the extraction of the danger of the soul from the heart, then the submission of the lower self to the fight.<sup>811</sup>

***We shall give him a great wage:*** It means Our remaining after him is better for him than his life through his lower self for his lower self. Their speaker said:

*Are you not a compensation for me for myself?*

*It suffices as a rank and honor.*

*Beyond you there is no goal for me,*

*nor any object to be sought.*<sup>812</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> The translation follows *quḥḥ* here from MS K117, f.52a rather than *qabīḥ* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>810</sup> In other words, the ties between you in which you respect and protect each other's lives and property have been broken.

<sup>811</sup> The Arabic here is *awwal<sup>an</sup> ikhrāj khaṭar al-rūḥ min al-qalb thumma taslīm al-naḥs li'l-qatl*. The exact meaning is a bit ambiguous, but the gist of it seems clear – fighting cannot be done in a sound way by men

<sup>812</sup> Muṣṭafā states that he was unable to locate this verse in any other source (no. 19, p.29).

***[4:75] What is wrong with you, that you do not fight in the way of God, and for the oppressed men, women, and children who say, ‘Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are evildoers and appoint for us a protector from You, and appoint for us from You a helper’.***

What is it that prevents you from fighting in the way of God? What is it that makes you not desire to give your lifeblood for God? Would it be to you if you had offered your spirits in God and for God? Are you afraid to come up short against God? Or Do you not know that you will be gathered to God? Why is His remaining after your being annihilated in God not enough for you?

***[4:76] Those who believe fight in the way of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of a false deity. Fight therefore against the friends of Satan; surely the plotting of Satan is ever feeble.***

Those who are sincerely devoted to God do not prefer anything to God and they do not hold anything back from God. They are ever against their lower selves for the sake of God. Those who disbelieve are the reverse to the states of the believers. Therefore He strengthened and encouraged [the believers] saying: ***Fight therefore against the friends of Satan***, i.e., do not feel any fear towards them, for I am taking care of your affairs and will suffice for you against your enemies.

***[4:77] Have you not seen those to whom it was said, ‘Restrain your hands, and establish the prayer, and pay the alms’? Then, as soon as fighting was prescribed for them, lo, a party of them fear people as they would fear God, or with more fear and they said, ‘Our Lord, why have You prescribed fighting for us? Why not defer us to a near term?’***

Remove your hands from your affairs and entrust them to the object of your worship.

It is said: Cease from adopting the prohibited and acting as you please with it.

It is said: Resist cravings.

It is said, ***Restrain your hands*** except in raising them up to God in petitioning in humble supplication.

*Then, as soon as fighting was prescribed for them*, they found His command burdensome and wanted to hasten His kindness. But servanthood is in the abandonment of finding things burdensome and repudiating the wish to hasten [what one finds pleasing]. It is in distancing oneself from annoyance and impatience.

[4:77 cont'd] *Say, 'The enjoyment of this world is trifling; and the Hereafter is better for him who fears; and you shall not be wronged, a single date-thread.*

He made you powerful in this world and then said: *The enjoyment of this world is trifling*. So it counts for nothing for you and if you were to give alms from it so much as half a date, you would be saved from the Fire and reach the Garden. This is the most extraordinary generosity.

Making light of all the stuff of your lower self for the sake of your beloved is the strongest of the signs of your companionship.

It is said when He causes you to forsake the present world, He minimizes it in your eyes so that abandoning it will be easy for you.

It is said: *Say, 'The enjoyment of this world* in its entirety *is trifling*. That which is your portion is less than this, so how would there be a reckoning for you because of what is permitted (*tahlīl*) in it if your pact is secure from substituting (*tabdīl*)?

If the value of this world is trifling, that which is cheaper than the cheap is anyone who is content with what is cheap as a substitution for the precious.

The believer has become divorced from the world (*al-kawn*) gradually, for He said first: *Say, 'The enjoyment of this world is trifling; and the Hereafter is better* and He seizes them from the present world by what comes after. Then He strips them of both worlds, saying: *But what is with God is better and more lasting* [42:36].

[4:78] *Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, though you should be in raised-up towers'. And if a good thing befalls them, they say, 'This is from God'; but if an evil thing befalls them, they say, 'This is from you'. Say, 'Everything is from God'. What is wrong with this people that they do not understand?*

Death is joy to the believer and the news of its drawing near is good news to him because it is a means of reaching the Real and whoever loves to meet God, God loves to meet him.

It is said if death is inevitable, submission to His decree willingly is better than bearing it unwilling. Therefore He told them, because of the weakness of their eyes and the infirmity of their beliefs, when something good befalls them, they are joyful because of it and show gratitude. If an evil thing befalls them, they are not guided to God and the Magian disposition flows in them and they attribute it (*aḍāfū*) to the created,<sup>813</sup> but He replied to them and said: Say to them, O Muḥammad, ‘Everything is from God in creating and originating, producing and inventing, decreeing and facilitating’.

**[4:79] *Whatever good befalls you it is from God; whatever evil befalls you is from yourself. We have sent you to people as a messenger and God suffices as Witness.***

Whatever good that befalls you is a bounty from God and whatever evil befalls you is acquired (*kasb*)<sup>814</sup> from yourself. Both of them are created by God (s).

**[4:80] *Whoever obeys the Messenger, verily obeys God; and whoever turns his back, We have not sent you as a watcher over them.***

This verse alludes to the gathering (*jam*‘) of the state of the Messenger (s). He (s) said, ‘Obedience to him is obedience to Us’.<sup>815</sup> Whoever draws near to him draws near to Us. Those he accepts are those We accept and those he rejects are those We reject.

**[4:81] *They say, Obedience; but when they sally forth from you, a party of them harbor other than what they say. God writes down what they harbor. So turn away from them, rely on God, and God suffices as a Guardian.***

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<sup>813</sup> As in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 3:28, al-Qushayrī understands Magian believes as contradicting divine unity (*tawḥīd*).

<sup>814</sup> Al-Qushayrī is distinguishing his concept of man’s acquisition (*kasb*) of acts from attribution (*iḍāfa*). In the notes to his translation of al-Qushayrī’s *Luma’ fī ‘l-i’tiqād*, Richard M. Frank suggests that while ‘acquisition’ is a secondary meaning intended by al-Qushayrī and other Ash‘arī theologians, the English word ‘performance’ better captures what is primarily meant in these discussions. He writes, “a performance is the acting out of the work of another and its interpretation and so is distinct from the work or act (*fī ‘l*) as that of which it is the performance; the work is the created entity...” (Frank, XIV, p.73, n.11).

<sup>815</sup> For more information on what al-Qushayrī means by the state of ‘gathering’, see his sections on ‘Gathering and separation’ (*jam’ wa ‘l-farq*) and ‘the gathering of gathering’ (*jam’ al-jam’*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, pgs. ; Knysh translation 87-89).

It means that when they come to you, they surrender in your witnessing (*mushāhada*), but when they leave, the light of your approach (*iqbāl*) is cut off and they return to darknesses, just as they say:

*Whenever he repents  
he returns to his ignorance,  
just as the one who is feeble  
suffers a relapse.*<sup>816</sup>

**[4:82-4:83] *What, do they not ponder the Qur'ān? If it had been from other than God surely they would have found therein much inconsistency. \* And when there comes to them an issue, be it of security, or of fear, they broadcast it. If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them; those among them who are able to think it out (yastanbiṭūnahu), would have known it from them. And but for the bounty of God to you and His mercy, you would surely have followed Satan, except a few [of you].***

‘Pondering’ (*tadabbur*) is an allusion to meanings acquired through diving into contemplations (*afkār*). The extraction of the jewels of meanings is through the intricacies of ‘thinking it out’ (*istinbāt*).<sup>817</sup>

***And when there comes to them an issue...:*** When they have been heedless of the Real, there is no one to whom they can transmit their secrets so they reveal the secret to each other. But for the believers, the Knower of their secrets is their Friend and Protector. They speak with Him about what comes to them and have no need to broadcast the secret to any created being. The Hearer of their whispered confidence is God and the Knower of their hidden affairs<sup>818</sup> is God.

***If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them...:*** i.e., if they had brought their secrets to those who are intimate friends<sup>819</sup> and those who are among the

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<sup>816</sup> Muṣṭafā traces the verse to Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs and adds another line: *The shaykh does not abandon his morals until he is hidden in the earth of his tomb* (Muṣṭafā, no. 8, p. 73). The verse cited here is also cited by al-Qushayrī in his commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:20.

<sup>817</sup> The word *istinbāt* means to extract or elicit something, like water from a well or knowledge by inference.

<sup>818</sup> The translation follows *khafāyā* from MS K117, 52b here rather than *khiṭāb* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>819</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been filled in with the word *maḥram* from MS K117, f.52b. It has been rendered plural in the translation because of the context.



people of the story,<sup>820</sup> they would have dispelled their doubts and would have helped them through the light of guidance and spiritual instruction.

*And but for the bounty of God* with His friends, they would have wandered in every wadi of separation just as those like them in outward form at that time.

**[4:84] *So fight in the way of God; you are charged only with yourself. And urge on the believers; maybe God will restrain the might of the disbelievers; God is mightier and more severe in castigation.***

Rise up with Us in giving up everything from you to Our command, for you<sup>821</sup> – just as there is no one to compare to you in your rank because of your elevated status over all, so We do not charge anyone but you with the like of what you have been charged and We do not burden anyone but you with what you have been burdened with because of your singularity in worth<sup>822</sup> as opposed to those like you in outward form.

**[4:85] *Whoever intercedes with a good intercession shall receive a share of it; and whoever intercedes with an evil intercession, shall receive the like from it. God conserves all things.***

The intercessor liberates the state of the one for whom he intercedes. The intercessor becomes worthy of his weighty rank from God (s) by virtue of his intercession, while the one who has hastened to do corruption<sup>823</sup> with regards to Our command bears the responsibility and carries the weight of the sin.

**[4:86] *And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with better than it, or return it. Surely God keeps count of all things.***

An instruction for them in amicable relations and the good manners of companionship. Verily when someone does you some good, it becomes a loan you owe him. Whether you do more than him or not, at least do not do less than what he has done.

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<sup>820</sup> The translation follows *qiṣṣa* here rather than *qaṣd* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>821</sup> The ‘you’ throughout this paragraph is in the singular, as it is in the Qur’ānic verse, which addresses the Prophet.

<sup>822</sup> The translation follows the word *qadr* from MS K117, f.52b rather than *qudra* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>823</sup> The language al-Qushayrī uses here echoes Qur’ānic verses 2:205, 5:33 and 5:64 about those who *hasten about the earth to do corruption*.

[4:87] *God — there is no god except Him, He will surely gather you to the Day of Resurrection whereof there is no doubt. And who is truer in statement than God?*

This address contains both a negation and an affirmation. The negation refers to what is other than God. What has been negated for what is other than Him is impossible. The affirmation belongs to Him in divinity. Negation is inconceivable for Him in what He has affirmed.

[4:88] *What is wrong with you that you have become two parties, regarding the hypocrites, when God has overthrown them for what they earned? What, do you desire to guide him whom God has sent astray? And he whom God sends astray, you will never find for him a way.*

Keep singular<sup>824</sup> the covenant regarding them, that they are My enemies. They will not receive My good pleasure from Me in this world or the next. Your good intentions will not save them from what My decree has determined. The decrees do not revolve about good intentions.<sup>825</sup>

[4:89-4:90] *They long that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, so then you would be equal; therefore do not take friends from among them until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn away, take them and slay them wherever you find them; and do not take any of them as a patron, or as a helper. \* Except those who attach themselves to a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or come to you with their breasts constricted about the prospect of fighting you, or fighting their people. Had God willed, He would have given them sway over you, so that assuredly they would have fought you.*

*And so if they stay away from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God does not allow you any way against them.*

The allusion is to the masters of confusion and sickly states who wish that the sincere would be like them.<sup>826</sup> How preposterous would it be for their desire to be actualized! As long as those who are oppositional are not in harmony with you,<sup>827</sup> leave them, oppose them, and do not concur with them in any way. Do not associate with them, and do not take any of them as a friend or helper. Someone who agrees with you in your goal is better for you than associating with someone who opposes with antipathy.

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<sup>824</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been filled in with the word *afridū* from MS K117, f.52b.

<sup>825</sup> The blank in the Basyūnī edition has been filled in with *himam* from MS K117, f.52b.

<sup>826</sup> The translation follows *mithlahum* from MS K117, f.52b rather than *minhum* from the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>827</sup> The 'you' here is the plural form.

***Except those who attach themselves to a people...:*** The allusion in this verse is that He gives leave, for the excuses given, to associate outwardly in a friendly manner with those who are oppressed.

***And so if they stay away from you...:*** The allusion in it is when someone who is not one of the people of the story<sup>828</sup> associates with you, and they are intent upon remaining in the familiar regions of their worldly share, do not call them to your path but submit your circumstances<sup>829</sup> to them in peace. Verily He has given you the power to regard them with the eye of mercy, as your intentions choose regarding them, so submit your circumstances to them in peace.

***[4:91] You will find others desiring to have security from you and security from their own people; yet whenever they are returned to sedition, they are overwhelmed by it. So, if they do not stay away from you, and offer you peace, and restrain their hands, then take them and slay them wherever you come upon them; against them We have given you clear warrant.***

Whoever desires the gathering of two opposing things, his effort is ruined and his resolve does not grow. Just as no individual can be both a hypocrite and a Muslim, no individual can be desirous of the Real and remain with the precepts of the people of habit. Verily spiritual desire and habit are opposites, and it is necessary to distinguish things which are opposites and to distance yourself from that which has no relation to you.

***[4:92] It is not for a believer to slay a believer, except by mistake. He who slays a believer by mistake, then let him set free a believing slave, and blood-money is to be submitted to his family, unless they remit it as a charity. If he belongs to a people at enmity with you and is a believer, then the setting free of a believing slave. If he belongs to a people between whom and you there is a covenant, then the blood-money must be paid to his family, and the setting free of a believing slave. But if he has not the wherewithal, then the fasting of two successive months, a relenting from God. And God is ever Knowing, Wise.***

He mitigated the matter of the mistake for the perpetrator to the point of giving the burden of restitution to the larger group responsible for the bloodwit.<sup>830</sup> The elite are those responsible for the bloodwit of the weak in the community and the people of mystical knowledge are those responsible for the bloodwit of the aspirants. The shaykhs are those responsible for the bloodwit of the disciples (*fuqarā*), so their way is to bear the burdens of the weak in what afflicts them.

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<sup>828</sup> i.e., the Sufis

<sup>829</sup> The Arabic here is *aḥwāl*, which can also be translated as ‘states’.

<sup>830</sup> For an explanation of the concept of collective responsibility in paying blood money for a killing, see the article ‘*Āqila*’ by Rudolph Peters in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

[4:93] *And whoever slays a believer deliberately, his requital is Hell, abiding therein, and God is wroth with him and has cursed him, and has prepared for him a mighty chastisement.*

Just as the killing of another has been prohibited to you, killing yourself is prohibited to you. Whoever follows his whims seeks the blood of his self. Whoever does not give good counsel and admonition to an aspirant, and does not assist him in his endeavor, has sought his blood. He is trapped by his own situation. It is natural that his outcome is unpleasant in that he cannot enjoy what he has held back from the aspirants in his states. Indeed, He (s) said: O David, when you see someone seeking me, be his servant.

[4:94] *O you who believe, when you are going forth in the way of God, be discriminating and do not say to him who offers you peace: ‘You are not a believer, desiring the transient goods of the life of this world. With God are plenteous spoils. So you were formerly, but God has been gracious to you. So be discriminating. Surely God is ever Aware of what you do.*

Associate with people according to what they show in their states. Do not examine them without purpose, for surely the One who takes responsibility for secrets is God. When there is a corrupt objective, you are prompted to it from the precepts of the lower self. As for whoever’s vision is through God, nothing is veiled from him, so let him protect the secret of God in what was disclosed to him and let him not reveal to his companion what God has shown him<sup>831</sup> regarding it.

[4:95-4:96] *The believers who sit at home, other than those who have an injury are not the equals of those who struggle in the way of God with their possessions and their lives. God has preferred those who struggle with their possessions and their lives over the ones who sit at home by a degree; yet to each God has promised the goodly reward, and God has preferred those who struggle over the ones who sit at home with a great reward, \* degrees from Him, and forgiveness and mercy. Surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

The Real (s) has gathered all of His friends in His favors but he distinguishes between them in degrees. Whether one is rich or a servant, there is one richer than him. With one who is great, there is one greater than him. These stars are glittering, but the moon is above them, and when the sun appears it outshines all by its light!

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<sup>831</sup> The translation follows *arāhu* from MS K117, 53a rather than *arāda* from the Basyūnī edition.

**[4:97] *And those whom the angels take [in death], while they are wronging their souls, the angels will say, ‘What was your predicament?’ They will say, ‘We were oppressed in the land’. The angels will say, ‘But was not God’s earth spacious that you might have emigrated therein?’ As for such, their abode shall be Hell — an evil journey’s end!***

The allusion in it is to one whose time has come while he is trapped in his lower self and in bondage to his cravings – there is no excuse for him since he did not emigrate to the shadow of His nearness to be saved from the contemptible nature<sup>832</sup> of his lower self, for there is no veil between you and this talk except your whim.

**[4:98-4:99] *Except the oppressed among the men, women, and children who are unable to devise a plan and are not guided to a way. \*As for such, perhaps God will pardon them, for God is ever Pardoning, Forgiving.***

The allusion in it is to those who are overwhelmed and annihilated by meanings, and then they remain as those who act on His behalf. There is no power or strength belonging to them. What appears to them is what He (s) causes to flow over them. After the return of their selves through the reality of the Real, they are effaced from themselves and are not guided to anything other than Him as a way and do not take even a breath for anything other than Him.

It is said, in accordance with the outward aspect of the verse, that it may be that the Real (s) will bless with pardon those whose excuses hold them back from [this] choice.

**[4:100] *Whoever emigrates in the way of God will find in the earth many refuges and abundance; whoever goes forth from his house as an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage is then incumbent upon God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.***

Whoever has emigrated in God from what is other than God, his goal has become authentically directed towards God. He has found an ample space in the courtyard of generosity, a resting place in the shelter of welcome, and a spacious life under the wing of nearness. The emigrant, in the real sense, is whoever has emigrated from his lower self and his whim and this is only proven true through the abandonment all his objects of desire. Whoever makes Him his goal but his time comes before attaining it – he can not but end up on the plains of communion with Him and his spirit can only come to rest in the homelands of nearness to Him.

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<sup>832</sup> The translation follows the word *hawān* from MS K117, f.53a here.

**[4:101] *And when you are going forth in the land you would not be at fault if you shorten the prayer if you fear that you may be afflicted by those who do not believe; the disbelievers are a manifest foe to you.***

The shortening of prayers is the recommended practice (*sunna*) in travel. Although first legislated in a time of fear, it remained even without the fear, in kindness to [God's] servants. When the shortening of prayers because of traveling became obligatory (*fard*), they were given leave for supererogatory devotion on their camel mount as a substitution, in whichever way [the mount] turned without seeking the qibla, and likewise for the person on foot. This was so that it would be known that permission to engage in talk with God is ongoing, at any time. If you wish to take part in it, you may do so whenever you wish. If you want to stay away as permitted, you may do as you wish. This is the most extraordinary kindness and a protection of the practice (*sunna*) of faithfulness (*wafā`*) and the confirmation of the meaning of friendship (*walā`*).

**[4:102] *When you are among them, and you stand to lead them in prayer, let a party of them stand with you, and let them take their weapons. Then when they have performed their prostrations, let them be behind you, and let another party who have not prayed come and pray with you, taking their precautions and their weapons. The disbelievers wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your baggage that they may descend upon you all at once. You are not at fault, if rain bothers you, or if you are sick, to lay aside your weapons. But take your precautions; God has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement.***

This verse indicate that [the obligation of] prayer is not lifted from the servant so long as there is a breath remaining in him to choose, neither in fear nor in security, and neither when you are in a state of separation where the precepts of the law predominate, nor when you are at the source of gathering where there is the overwhelming authority of reality.

**[4:103] *When you have performed the prayer, remember God, standing and sitting and on your sides. Then, when you are reassured, observe the prayer, surely the prayer is for believers a prescription at specific times.***

The external duties are at determined times, while the presence of the heart in remembrance is continuous without stopping. In terms of the outward practice, it is one time and not another. But in terms of hearts, beware of the absence from what is real for even a moment, no matter what state you are in. Remembrance is for however you are, just as you are. Prayer is ***when you are reassured.***

[4:104] *Be not faint in seeking the enemy; if you are suffering, they are also suffering as you are suffering; and you hope from God that for which they cannot hope. God is ever Knower, Wise.*

Stand up for God and let your trust be in God in your struggle.

*If you are suffering, they are also suffering:* People share with you in experiencing suffering but they are different from you in the witnessing of the heart, for you witness what they do not witness and you find in your hearts what they do not find. So it is unseemly for you to lag behind them in effort and struggle.

[4:105-4:106] *Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by that which God has shown you. And do not be a disputant for traitors. \* And pray for forgiveness from God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.*

We did not command you to judge between them blindly, but rather *by that which God has shown you*, i.e., by that which He unveiled to you from the lights of insight until you understood it by Our teaching you and Our directing you. This is also the case with those who judge in truth from your community.

*And do not be a disputant for traitors:* i.e., do not defend the masters of worldly concerns, but rather be with the children of [God's] rights. Whoever leans toward whim is a traitor with regards to what has been entrusted to his soul in God-fearingness. Whoever inclines towards the different inclinations of desires is a traitor with regards to what is sought after in life in order to become acquainted with the Protector.

*And pray for forgiveness from God* for your community, for surely We have protected you in the matter by Our saying: *that God may forgive you what is past of your sin* [48:2].

[4:107-4:108] *And do not dispute on behalf of those who betray themselves; surely God loves not one who is treacherous and sinful. \* They hide themselves from people, but they do not hide themselves from God; for He is with them while they plot at night with discourse displeasing to Him. God is ever Encompassing of what they do.*

Those who prefer their worldly concerns to His rights and are content (*rāḍūn*) to remain in the familiar territories of their whim without moving to the waystations of [ultimate] contentment

(*riḍā*'), verily God does not love people of treachery so He will surely humble them and will not honor them.

***They hide themselves from people:*** Looking to creation predominates over their hearts and they do not perceive that the Real is well aware of their hearts – those are the ones whose hearts have been branded by God with the mark of separation.

[4:109] ***Ah! There you are you have contested on their behalf in the life of this world; but who will contest against God on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be a guardian for them.***

i.e., We defend them out of respect for you because you are with them, but how will their state be on the Day of Resurrection since your blessing has disappeared from them O believers?

[4:110] ***Whoever does evil, or wrongs himself, and then prays for God's forgiveness, he shall find God is Forgiving, Merciful.***

'Then' is a particle indicating extended time, i.e. they pass their lives in useless activities and oppositional behaviors and then in the end of their lives they pray for God's forgiveness.

***He shall find God:*** Finding is the ultimate event. The one who is disobedient seeks nothing but forgiveness, but God (s) brings him to this ultimately by His grace, if He wills. His way is to bring about more than what is hoped by the one hoping.

[4:111] ***And whoever commits a sin commits it against himself only; and God is ever Knower, Wise.***

The Real is free of any need for the obedience of those who are obedient and the error of the disobedient. So the one who obeys obtains his portion and the one who disobeys takes his.

[4:112] ***And whoever commits a mistake or a sin, and then casts it upon the innocent, he has thereby burdened himself with calumny and a manifest sin.***



Whoever attributes to an innocent person what he himself has done in disgraceful acts, God reverses the affair for him: He clothes that innocent one with the robe of the good deeds of his accuser (*rāmīhi*) and draws the skirt of pardon over his bad deeds (*masāwi'hi*). And He turns the affair back upon the aggressor by that which He exposes of his types of behaviors in all of his affairs.

[4:113] *Were it not for God's bounty to you and His mercy, a party of them would have intended to lead you astray; but they lead only themselves astray; they will not hurt you at all. God has revealed to you the Book and wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know; and God's bounty to you is ever great.*

Bounty (*faḍl*) is undeserved beneficence.<sup>833</sup> The allusion here in 'bounty' is to His protection (*iṣma*) of him, for the Real (s) protected him, singling him out specially for this protection. Just as He protected him from abandoning His right, He protected him in holding him back from the deception of His creation, so He said: ***Were it not for God's bounty to you and His mercy...*** On the contrary, there will be no way that anyone can lead you astray for you are in the grip of the Glory and ***they lead only themselves astray and they will not hurt you at all***, since that which is guarded (*maḥfūz*) by Us is secured from anything else. Verily God (s) has favored you for the revelation of the Book and has chosen you for the different aspects of favor and affirmation. ***And He has taught you what you did not know***. What He has granted to you is unlike anything that He has granted to those He has chosen for knowledge. It is possible that He meant by it his (s) knowledge of God and His Majesty, his knowledge of his own servanthood, and the measure of his state in the worthiness of its rare might and beauty.

It is said ***He has taught you what you did not know*** of the good manners of service, since the mystical knowledge of reality has not been ambiguous for you.

It is said He made you free of the instruction of any others so that none would have a light except that borrowed from your light. Those who do not walk under your banner will not reach the entirety of Our kindness and will not receive the good fortune of Our nearness and communion.

***And God's bounty to you is ever great*** in endless eternity. You were known to Us in the nobility of rare might and the honor of rank<sup>834</sup> in all sempiternity. It is said ***He has taught you what you did not know*** of the sublimity of your rank over all others.

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<sup>833</sup> Basyūnī adds a footnote suggesting al-Qushayrī means 'beyond what is deserved'. In other words, bounty (*faḍl*) is not recompense but a gift.

<sup>834</sup> The translation follows 'rank' (*rutba*) from MS K117, f.54a here rather than 'lordship' (*rubūbiyya*) from the Basyūnī edition.

It is said ***He taught you what you did not know*** that one can only appreciate Our measure to the degree that one conforms to Our command.

[4:114] ***There is no good in much of their secret conversations, except for he who enjoins to voluntary almsgiving, or kindness, or setting things right between people. And whoever does that, desiring God's good pleasure, We shall surely give him a great wage.***

The best of actions is the one whose blessing extends beyond the actor to others and the excellence of almsgiving is that its benefit extends beyond the one who receives your gift. Chivalry (*futūwwa*) is to exert yourself for others.<sup>835</sup> In the tradition [the Prophet said]: **The worst of mankind are those who eat by themselves.**<sup>836</sup> The term 'almsgiving' (*ṣadaqa*) can be applied to every kind of good action (*iḥsān*). He (ṣ) said regarding the shortening of prayers in travel: **This is an almsgiving which God has given you, so accept His almsgiving.**<sup>837</sup>

Almsgiving is of several types: your almsgiving to your soul and your almsgiving to others. Your almsgiving to your soul is your prompting it to perform the rights of God Most High, to restrain it from opposing His command, to hold back its hand from harming created beings, and to defend its thoughts and beliefs from evil. Your almsgiving to others is the almsgiving of wealth, the heart and the body. The almsgiving of wealth is the expenditure of riches, the almsgiving of the body is through performing service, and the almsgiving of the heart is through good intention and positive aspiration. Almsgiving to the poor is an external act about which there are no doubts. Almsgiving to the rich would be your giving liberally to them through them ( '*alayhim bihim* ? ), and that you cut off your hope from them and do not desire them.

As for ***kindness***, everything good in the law is kindness and from that is aid (*injād*) to Muslims. Their support (*is 'ād*) in what they have in it is nearness to God and intimacy with Him, and rising up together to obey. Whoever gives alms through his lower self in obeying His Lord, and gives alms through his heart to the good pleasure of His decree, He will not take revenge for his self and will encourage people according to what is in it (them?) to their salvation in guidance to His Lord. He will set things right between people by his almsgiving in his state, for surely the tongue of his action is more eloquent in admonition than the tongue of his speech, and he is the sincere one of his time. One who does not refine the behaviors of his self cannot refine the behaviors of others. Likewise, one who does not polish his own state can not polish that of others.

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<sup>835</sup> See the 'Section on Chivalry' (*bāb al-futūwwa*) in al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (vol. 2, pgs. 472-479; Knysch pgs. 237-242).

<sup>836</sup> Neither Basyūnī or 'Abd al-Raḥmān gives the source for this *ḥadīth*.

<sup>837</sup> Basyūnī states that this *ḥadīth* is related in Muslim...

*And whoever does that, desiring God's good pleasure*, not asking for wealth by it, or looking to achieve a state by it, will soon attain the rank of security in the path of God. This is the promised wage for him in this verse.

[4:115] *But whoever makes a breach with the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, and follows other than the way of the believers, We shall turn him over to what he has turned to, and We shall expose him in Hell — an evil journey's end.*

The thoughts of the Real are his ambassadors to the servant. One who resists the allusions to that which is sought from the path of the inner deserves the punishments of hearts, among which are that he is blinded from the insights of his own rectitude, just as the one who resists consensus (*ijmā'*) in religion is an outsider (*khārij*), so the one who resists what is known from reality after what the path has distinguished for him has stumbled (*sāqit*).

[4:116-4:119] *God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him; He forgives all except that, to whomever He will. Whoever associates anything with God, verily he has strayed far away. \* What they pray to instead of Him are but females, and they only pray to a rebellious satan. \* God has cursed him. And he said, 'Assuredly I will take to myself an appointed portion of Your servants. \* And I will surely lead them astray, and surely I will fill them with desires; and surely I will command them and they will cut up the cattle's ears. And surely I will command them and they will change God's creation'. And whoever takes Satan for a patron, instead of God, has surely suffered a manifest loss.*

*God does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him*: To acknowledge anything other than Him, imagining even an atom in being the cause of originating, is the source of polytheism (*shirk*) and there is no possibility of pardon for it, while there is a possibility for pardon for other things. Whoever seeks access to Him (*s*) by means of what he himself has imagined is associating others with Him with respect to what he does not know. No, He is God, the One.

*What they pray to instead of Him are but females*: They set up inanimate things given names and plunged forward into delusion. They relied on the errors of conjecturing and were led astray from the truth.

*And they only pray to a rebellious satan. God has cursed him*: i.e. what they prayed to was none other than Iblīs whom the Real distanced from His mercy and removed in estrangement. Iblīs is only one who is turned about in the grip according to what the Creator wants. If there were even an atom to acknowledge in him, it would be an associate in divinity. On the contrary, the Real (*s*) sets circumstances in motion over created beings. He creates what

follows his whisperings to created beings in being led astray, for He is the Guide and the One Who leads astray. He (s) is the One Who has free disposal over all. God Most High created in their hearts what follows his whisperings to them in the power of their hopes. He makes ugly actions seem beautiful in their eyes and then He does not make any actualization for their desires and does not follow in confirming what they had hoped for. He Most High is the one who brings into existence these effects as a whole and attributes them to Satan at one time and to the unbeliever at another. This is the meaning of His saying: ***And I will surely lead them astray, and surely I will fill them with desires...*** and the meaning of His saying: *He promises them, and fills them with desires* [4:120].

[4:120-4:121] ***He promises them, and fills them with desires; but what Satan promises them is only delusion. \* For such — their abode shall be Hell, and they shall find no refuge from it.***

For those whose portion is being led astray in the present, he has decreed punishment in the end. If not for the fact that He made appear what He made appear by His deliberative power, how could even a sliver of being led astray or being guided belong to anyone? True awareness of the declaration of oneness (*tawhīd*) is rare and the masters of it are few.

[4:122] ***But those who believe and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein for ever; God's promise in truth; and who, is truer in utterance than God?***

Those whom We have assisted in judgment and speech, We helped them at the time We brought them into existence out of generosity and strength. Then surely We brought about what had been promised in reward in what We gave them in a good return.

[4:123-124] ***It is not your desires nor the desires of the People of the Scripture. Whoever does evil shall be requited for it; and he will not find besides God any friend or helper. \* And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer — such shall be admitted into Paradise, and not be wronged, the dint in a date-stone.***

Whoever plants colocynth<sup>838</sup> will not harvest roses and jasmine.<sup>839</sup> Whoever drinks deadly poison will not find the taste of honey. Likewise, whoever squanders the duty of service will not become firmly established on the carpet of nearness. Whoever is branded with misfortune

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<sup>838</sup> A bitter plant.

<sup>839</sup> The Arabic word here is 'abhar (perhaps vowelled differently), which Basyūnī identifies as meaning 'jasmine' or 'narcissus' from *Lisān al-'arab*.

will not be provided with the choicest part. Whoever rejects the divine decree, there is no helper for him in creation.

***And whoever does righteous deeds...:*** Whoever labors in Our service will not be kept from attaining Our blessing. Indeed, whomever We have made rich in seeking Us, We honor him in finding Us. Whomever We have made to drink from the cup of longing for Us, We bring him to the intimacy of meeting Us.

[4:125-4:126] ***And who is fairer in religion than he who submits his purpose to God and is virtuous, and who follows the creed of Abraham as a ḥanīf? And God took Abraham for a close friend. \* To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and God is ever the Encompasser of all things.***

There is no one ***fairer in religion than he who submits his purpose to God***. It means he has made seeking God his sole objective and purified his tie with God from what is other than God. Then he submits himself in all of his states to God through God and does not hold back anything from God in his wealth, his body, his spirit, his strength, his family, and his children. This was the state of Abraham (‘a).

***And is virtuous (muḥsin):*** Being virtuous (*iḥsān*), as attested to in the law, is to worship God as if you see Him. A remnant from the eye of separation must remain for the servant so that his performance of His rights (*s*) will be sound because if he were to be completely taken up in the real, his submitting and virtuousness would not be sound. This is following Abraham (‘a) the *ḥanīf*. Nothing remained of him which could be described as perpetual.

***And God took Abraham for a close friend:*** He stripped the event from every effort, labor, seeking, and striving when He said this, so that it would be known that friendship is a clothing the Real puts on one, not an attribute the servant acquires.

It is said the friend is entirely in need of the Real at every breath. There is nothing from it for him that is not through God and for God in every one of his breaths and states, a longing from the friendship which is privation and need.

It is said it is from that friendship which is love and the friendship that love reaches every part of him and permeates his innermost self until there is no possibility in it for any other.

When God (s) purified him (‘a) of it, and emptied from him his portion for the performance of His right after his erasure from everything that is not God (s).

Then He said: *And announce among the people the [season for] Pilgrimage [22:27].* The pilgrim does not say ‘*labayyka*’<sup>840</sup> except to God and this is an allusion to the gathering of the gathering (*jam ‘ al-jam ‘*).<sup>841</sup>

[4:127] *They will ask you for a pronouncement concerning women. Say: ‘God pronounces to you concerning them, and what is recited to you in the Book, concerning the orphan women to whom you do not give what is prescribed for them for you desire to marry them, and the oppressed children and that you deal justly with orphans. Whatever good you do, God is ever Knower of it’.*

He prohibited them from coveting that which would prompt them to harm or do wrong to the oppressed among women and orphans. He explained that the God is their avenger and whoever treats them well for fear of God will not lose anything on account of God but rather will find a beautiful recompense. But whoever acts insolently with them will suffer a painful tribulation because of that.

[4:128] *And if a woman fears from her husband ill-treatment or rejection (i‘rād), they are not at fault if they are reconciled through some agreement; reconciliation is better. But greed has been made present in the souls. If you are virtuous and fear, surely God is ever aware of what you do.*

The companionship of people with one another, if it is disengaged from the discourse of the Real, will surely risk alienation and blame and will be mixed with antipathy and disgust. Whoever turns away (‘*araḍa*’)<sup>842</sup> from God in his heart, people turn away from protecting his right and all come out against him in finding his affair pathetic and regarding his worth as contemptible. But whoever returns to God in his heart, his affair will be balanced as a whole and in the particular. His chest will expand with the capacity to bear what he faces in people’s bad traits. He will draw the skirt of pardon over the defects of all of them and prefer reconciliation in abandoning his portion and handing over their portion. God Most High said: ***Reconciliation is better.***

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<sup>840</sup> Part of the rite of pilgrimage to Mecca is repeating a prayer that begins with ‘Here I am O God, at your service’ (*labayyka*).

<sup>841</sup> See al-Qushayrī’s section ‘Gathering of the Gathering’ (*jam ‘ al-jam ‘*) in his *Risāla* (vol. 1, p...; Knysh translation p. 88-9).

<sup>842</sup> Al-Qushayrī’s use of the verb ‘rejects’ or ‘turns away’ (‘*araḍa*’) here mirrors the verbal noun *i‘rād* in the Qur’ānic verse.

To ignore your own aversion to those who quarrel with you is more appropriate for you and more advantageous than being arrogant with your foe out of a desire for revenge and presenting evidence for that which belongs to you in privilege. Most people<sup>843</sup> are in the fetters of this tribulation.

***But greed has been made present in the souls:*** The greed of the lower self is the concern of the servant for his worldly portion. Whoever is veiled from witnessing the Real is inevitably brought back to witnessing the lower self.

***If you are virtuous:*** It means that would be better for you. Being virtuous is that you worship God as if you see him.

***And fear:*** It means [fear] your looking to your own status and worth. Rather look to your Lord and in seeing Him be annihilated from any vision of your own worth.

***Surely God is ever aware of what you do:*** It means when you are annihilated from yourselves and your acting, God is the best to know after your annihilation and the best to bring things about after your effacement.

***[4:129] You will never be able to be just to your wives, even if you be eager; yet do not turn altogether away, so that you leave her like one suspended. If you set things right, and fear, surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.***

It means when you are concerned for yourself<sup>844</sup> in your affairs, the situation is reflected back on you, and the soundness of your union becomes the reverse by a corruption on your part. But when you have made God your concern in your affairs, your way of living will become balanced and the moment will be cleared of turmoil.

It is said whomever God has determined to be deficient in intellect in his state,<sup>845</sup> you are not able to set their deficiency right by your ability.

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<sup>843</sup> The translation follows ‘people’ (*nās*) from MS K117, f.55a here rather than the word ‘hypocrites’ (*munāfiqūn*) found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>844</sup> There is a blank in Basyūnī’s text, which he suggests may be filled in with ‘you are concerned for yourselves’ to parallel the phrase, ‘when you have made God your concern’. The word appearing in MS K117, f.55a is unclear.

<sup>845</sup> Basyūnī inserts a footnote here saying that by those deficient in intellect, al-Qushayrī means women here.



***Yet do not turn altogether away:*** It means do not deviate from the clear path of the command. Stop where you have been made to stop and do what you have been commanded to do.

***So that you leave her like one suspended:*** It means that you when you prevent them from the companionship of others and then cut them off from their shares with you, you cause them harm in two ways: there is nothing to be had from you nor is there any way to someone else. Surely this harm is great. The allusion in this is to the fact that when the path to your worldly concerns is blocked to you, He (s) opens the witnessing of His right to you and the finding of His kindness. Surely whoever's annihilation is in God, the Real is his substitute. If you make right what is between you and other people, and put your trust in what is between you and the Real, surely God will be forgiving of your failings and merciful in pardoning your sins.

[4:130] ***But if they separate, God will compensate each of them out of His plenty. God is ever Embracing, Wise.***

The companionship from which there is no escape is the companionship of the heart with perpetual need for God, since there is no escape from the Real. As for all others, there is no need for one other except in the external sense – that follows the conjectures of the companions of separation. As for the people of actualization, they have no doubt that the need of mankind is entirely for God (s).

[4:131] ***To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. We have charged those who were given the Scripture before you, and you, 'Fear God'. 'If you disbelieve, then to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth'; God is ever Independent, Praised.***

He obligated everyone to return to Him and to avoid everything other than Him, and to stick to His command, but one party has been given success and another abandoned. Then He taught the people of realization that He is independent of the obedience of every friend and innocent of the error of every one who strays.

[4:132] ***To God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; God suffices as a Guardian.***

He cuts off the innermost selves from attachment to anything but Him by informing them that He alone possesses what is in the heavens and the earth. Then He puts the desire in them for His fair governorship and His support for that which they need of Him through beautiful kindness and superior sufficiency in his saying: ***God suffices us as a Guardian.*** A guardian



makes things right by his authority over your situation and he does not hold back what is yours.

**[4:133] *If He will, He can remove you, O people, and bring others, surely God is ever able to do that.***

One Who has no need of another in all sempiternity has no need for him in endless eternity. It is said He has no need for anyone, while the servant is not able to do without Him for even a single breath.

It is said there is no limit to the things which are decreed: if it were not ‘Amr, than it would be Zayd. If it were not a servant, it would be servants. The only one for whom there is no substitute or replacement is the One, the Unique.

**[4:134] *Whoever desires the reward of this world, then God has the reward of this world and of the Hereafter; God is ever Hearer, Seer.***

When they attach their hearts to what is immediate in this world, He reminded them of the event of the Hereafter, and said: ***then God has the reward of this world and of the Hereafter.*** This was to inform them that above their aspirations for this paltry thing there is something higher than it in the blessing of the Hereafter. When their objectives were elevated to the Hereafter, He cut them off from any external sign and created thing by His saying: *And God is better and more enduring* [20:73].

**[4:135] *O you who believe, be upright in justice; witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves; or parents and kinsmen, whether the person be rich or poor; God is closer to the two. So do not follow any whim, lest you swerve, for if you twist, or refrain, surely God is ever aware of what you do.***

‘Justice’ (*qist*) is being fair and equitable (‘*adl*). Being upright through God in fairness is fulfilling His rights against you and seeking to have His rights fulfilled among everyone with whom you have business. The way to make that happen is either through an exhortation to act kindly or a rebuke concerning something despicable or admonitory advice or direction to a legal issue or guidance to a duty. Whoever has a duty (*haqq*) remaining owed to God, the purest part of realization (*tahqīq*)<sup>846</sup> will not touch his innermost self.<sup>847</sup> The root of religion is

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<sup>846</sup> ‘Realization’ (*tahqīq*) is from the same root as *haqq*, which can be translated as ‘right’, ‘duty’, or ‘real’. To ‘realize’ is to recognize or give something its rightful due.

to prefer the rightful due of the Real (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) over the right of created beings. Whoever prefers anyone to God, whether it be a father, mother, child, kinsman, or relation; or holds back any portion from Him, is not upright in justice.

[4:136] *O you who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and the Book which has been revealed to His Messenger; and the Book which was revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in God and His angels and His Books, and His messengers, and the Last Day, verily he has strayed far away.*

*O you who believe* from the point of view of demonstrative proof (*burhān*), believe from the point of view of clear evidence (*bayān*) until you believe from the point of view of unveiling (*kashf*) and eye-witnessing (‘*ayān*).

It is said *O you who believe* through affirmation (*taṣḍīq*), believe through realization (*taḥqīq*) that your salvation is by His favor, not by your belief.

It is said *O you who believe* in the present, believe with enduring belief to the end.

It is said *O you who believe*, believe beyond every union and separation, finding and losing.

It is said *O you who believe* through applying the instrument of intellects, believe when you have alighted in the courtyard of arriving and the bewilderment of intuition is firmly established in you and the onslaughts of ... then ...from this absence and believe that that which dominated over you was the witness of the Real, not the reality of the Essence, for surely the eternal is sanctified and holy from any nearness or distance, and union and separation.

[4:137-4:138] *Verily, those who believed, and then disbelieved, and then believed, and then disbelieved, and then increased in disbelief — it was not for God to forgive them, nor to guide them to a way. \* Give tidings to the hypocrites that for them there is a painful chastisement.*

Those who their states have been exchanged and the rise and fall, and then are revived, then they stumble, then He seals their states in evil. Those are they who the arrows of majesty have

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<sup>847</sup> The sentence in the Basyūnī edition ends with *li-llāh* but this does not occur in MS K117, f.55b and has been omitted from the translation here.

struck by decree and the misery of fate has reached them as a seal and a state. The Real (s) does not guide them to a goal, nor does he lead them to rectitude. He give them news of eternal separation and tells them of eternal punishment.

[4:139-4:140] *Those who take disbelievers for friends instead of believers — do they desire power with them? Truly, power belongs altogether to God. \* It has been revealed to you in the Book that: ‘When you hear God’s signs being disbelieved in and mocked, do not sit with them until they engage in some other talk, for otherwise you would surely be like them’. God will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers, all together, into Hell.*

Whoever clings to a created thing has sought refuge to something other than the One Who can provide it for him. He relies on a place that will provide no shelter and has fallen into a bottomless abyss of error, its ruse powerful. ***Do they desire power*** with those who have been stricken with the lowly position of coming to be? How can they have any power to determine the truth? Whoever has no power attached to him, how can he extend power to anyone else?

It is said. ‘We do not know what part of their condition is more ugly: seeking power while they are themselves in the lowly position of subjugation and held in the grasp, or assuming or imagining it is from something other than God?’

It is said anyone who seeks something from anything other than His Face, failure (*ikfāq*) is the end of his effort (*jahdihi*). Whoever desires wealth in regions of want, being reduced to poverty (*imlāq*) is the outcome of his toil (*kaddihi*).<sup>848</sup>

It is said that if they had been guided to finding power, their objectives would not have been diverted to those who have nothing in their hands in the matter.

***Truly, power belongs altogether to God:*** The power is of two kinds: eternal power, which belongs to God by attribution, and a power of originating by which He (s) chooses whom He wills, which belongs to Him as an estate and is a kindness from it.

***It has been revealed to you in the Book...:*** Do not be neighbors to the lords of alienation, for the darknesses of their souls reach out to your hearts upon your seeking the fragrance of what they have rejected in their souls. Whomever people have come to partner with, they sit with them. The sitting companions of those who are in intimacy are those who seek intimacy and the sitting of those who are in darkness are those who are unsociable.

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<sup>848</sup> Note the rhyming pairs of words.

It is said emigrating from the enemies of the Real is obligatory, as is opposing adversaries. Detaching from them is a debt to be paid. To rely on the companions of heedlessness is to knock on the door of separation.

***For otherwise you would surely be like them:*** The clearest proof of a man's secret being is the companionship of those whom he associates with and the relationship to those whom he befriends. Like is tied to like and the branch extends outward from the trunk.

***[4:141] Those who wait in watch for you, and, if a victory comes to you from God, say, 'Were we not with you?'; but if the disbelievers have some luck, they say, 'Did we not gain mastery over you, and did we not defend you against the believers?' God will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, and God will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers.***

Because they lacked sincerity in the true sense and did not taste what they had experienced in belief, they were separated from those who submitted in the decree, who were unlike the disbelievers in name. He made wariness towards them obligatory on the people of truth and staying aloof from them. Then He (s) included a beautiful expression of His sufficiency for them by His saying: **God will never grant the disbelievers a way over the believers**, and this is in a general way since surely the evil of their deception is turned back on them and the requital for their plotting is applied to them. The followers of truth are aided from the power of the Real (s), while the root of what is false is torn out by the help of the Real (s).

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***[4:142–4:143] The hypocrites seek to trick God, but He is tricking them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily and to be seen by people, and they do not remember God save a little. \* Wavering, all the time — not to these, neither to those; and he whom God sends astray, you will never find for him a way.***

The trickery of the hypocrites is their outward display of conformity on the path while they inwardly cling to belief in what is other than God (*shirk*). The trickery of the Real is in what they imagine regarding salvation and what they have determined is their special entitlement to it. When the covering is lifted, they will know for certain that what they thought was drink (*sharāb*) was a mirage (*sarāb*). God Most High said: *And there will appear to them from God that which they had never reckoned* [39:47].

***When they stand up to pray...:*** The sign of hypocrisy is the finding of energy when being witnessed by others and the slackening of resolve when the opportunity to be seen passes.

***Wavering, all the time...:*** Those who are worth the least among created beings are those who remove the bodice of servanthood ( *‘ubūdiyya*) and have not found a way to true freedom (*hurriya*).<sup>849</sup> They do not have the slightest bit of precious nobility. Nor do they have an agreeable way of living in their heedlessness.

**[4:144] O you who believe, take not the disbelievers as friends instead of the believers: do you desire to give God over you a clear warrant?**

He repeated the admonition to them<sup>850</sup> and confirmed the command to part from the enemies so as to emphasize the warning, intensify the rebuke, and to end the argument by putting a stop to<sup>851</sup> any possible excuses.

***Do you desire to give God over you a clear warrant?:*** He warned them about their friendship with the disbelievers over and above other oppositional acts because it involves a preference for something other than the appropriate object of adoration (*ma ‘būd*). Preferring another to the beloved (*maḥbūb*) is the gravest of sins in the precepts of love. When one’s heart becomes engaged with others in the place reserved for believers, this necessarily brings about a bad outcome. How can one’s heart be engaged with others in the place reserved for the Real?

The punishment He promised them is leaving them to their own devices and what they have chosen in siding with the disbelievers. What a wretched substitution! It is the same with those who hold back from the Real (*ḥaqq*) – He leaves them with that which is created (*khalq*), which doubles their affliction. Both of these are severe punishments.

<sup>849</sup> The MS K117, f.56a has “service” (*khidma*) here instead of “freedom” (*hurriyya*).

<sup>850</sup> The admonition in Qur’ānic verse 4:139.

<sup>851</sup> The Basyūnī printed edition has a blank here, which has been filled in with *ḥasm* from MS K117, f.56a.

**[4:145] Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the Fire; and you will never find a helper for them.**

This verse indicates that there is no seeking protection (*musta'min*) for the hypocrites because being true to the trust (*īmān*) is what brings protection (*amān*). The one who holds true to the trust (*mu'min*) is saved by his faith (*īmān*) from the Fire – faith cannot be the cause for one's falling to the lowest level of the Fire. It is said this is verified by His words: *God is the best of schemers* [3:54 and 8:30], which is to say He is beyond all schemes. When the scheming of the hypocrites with the believers was exposed, their punishment was more severe than the punishment of those whose disbelief was declared openly.

It is said He transfers them from their present state to one that is more severe later, because of what is in the tradition: **One meets God in whatever state one is in.** Just as today the hypocrites are in the lowest level of abandonment,<sup>852</sup> so will they be transferred to the lowest level of the Fire. The lowest level of abandonment in the present is that they have nothing that could be called “faith” (*īmān*). They have not even the slightest thing from God and this is the greatest of afflictions.

It is said they deserve the lowest level of the Fire because they kept company here with the greatest name of God without respect (*hurma*). They were present in their speech but without any sense of propriety and by this one is driven away.

**[4:146] Save those who repent, and make amends, and hold fast to God and make their religion purely God's; those are with the believers; and God will certainly give the believers a great wage.**

Although not all of these conditions are ordinarily required to repent of one's sin, they are necessary for hypocrites to desist from their hypocrisy because of the recalcitrance of the state of their disbelief. After their meeting these conditions, He said to them: **those are with (ma'a) the believers.** He did not say “among” (*min*) the believers, and in this is an allusion as well to the weakness of their rank, even though they have sincerely made amends for the evil they did in the past. Regarding its meaning they have recited:

*Apologies are easy.*

*What a difference*

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<sup>852</sup> Basyūnī's edition has *hajr* here and he adds a footnote saying he thinks *hajr* is preferable. *Hajr* is the word that appears in MS K117, f.56a.

*between apologies  
and thankfulness!*<sup>853</sup>

It is said [by others] that the preposition “with” (*ma‘a*) indicates accompaniment, so that when they were included with the believers, they became deserving in the same way as the group of the believers. Repentance (*tawba*) here means they renounce their hypocrisy **and make amends** in the sincerity of their faith, **and hold fast to God** in absolving themselves of their own power and strength, and bearing witness to the blessing of God towards them in guiding them and delivering them from their hypocrisy, **and make their religion purely God’s**. They perceive<sup>854</sup> that their deliverance is by the grace of God, not by their states of faith in the present, nor by the renouncement of their past hypocrisy.

It is said they **make their religion purely God’s** means perpetually seeking God’s help in strengthening them in faith and holding them fast from reverting to their past hypocrisy.

It is said they **repent** from hypocrisy, **and make amends** through the purification of belief, **and hold fast to God** in asking for His favor, **and make their religion purely God’s** in their deliverance by the grace and kindness of God, not by their having done anything to make it happen.

**[4:147] Why would God chastise you if you are thankful and believe? God is ever Thankful, Knowing.**

This verse is among the verses which engender a beautiful hopefulness and powerful optimism because He has made two things, “thankfulness” (*shukr*) and “belief” (*īmān*), among the signs of protection (*amān*) in what is to come and these are easy and light qualities. Thankfulness is an assertion (*qāla*) and belief is a state (*hāla*). The way becomes easy for the servant when He is pleased with him in his words and state. Thankfulness is authentic only when one hears it from a believer rather than a disbeliever, because thankfulness indicates willing obedience (*ṭā‘a*) and this cannot be said to be true of those who do not believe.<sup>855</sup>

**And believe**, i.e., in what comes at the end. It is as if He is explaining that salvation will only be for those who, at the end of the day, believe. The meaning of the verse, then, is that God

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<sup>853</sup> I was unable to locate this verse in Muṣṭafā.

<sup>854</sup> The word *rā‘ū* has been added from MS K117, f.56b.

<sup>855</sup> One of the primary meanings of the word *kufṛ* in Arabic is ingratitude, or the denial of favors one has received.

will not chastise you with the chastisement of abiding if you are thankful in your present state and put your trust in what is to come.

It is said that if *you are thankful and believe*, you confirm the truth that your salvation is through God, not because of your thankfulness or your belief.

It is said thankfulness is witnessing the blessing from God and belief is seeing God in the blessing. It is as if He said, “If you witness the blessing from God, then the witnessing of this blessing will certainly not cut you off from witnessing the One who gives the blessing”.

**Kāna Allāh shākīr<sup>an</sup> ‘alīm<sup>an</sup>** means *Allah is ever Thankful, Knowing* (Allāh shākīr<sup>un</sup> ‘alīm<sup>un</sup>).<sup>856</sup> The meaning of His being “thankful” is that He is the One who commends his servant and the One who calls to witness him in what he does. This is because the true sense and definition of thankfulness is praise for the one who acts in a beautiful way (*muḥsin*) for the beautiful action he does (*iḥsān*). “The servant gives thanks to God” means he praises Him for His beautiful action (*iḥsān*) towards him, which is His blessing to him. “God gives thanks to the servant” means that He praises [the servant] for his beautiful action (*iḥsān*), which is his willing obedience to Him. For truly God praises him for what he does from this willing obedience despite His knowledge of his many sins.

It is said He is thankful to him even though He knows that he will return again to his unseemly actions.

It is said He is thankful to him because He knows his weakness, and it is said He is thankful to him because He knows that he is not disobedient and that his aim is not to oppose His Lord. Rather, he sins because of the overwhelming cravings that are among the states of being human.

It is said [the servant] is thankful to Him because he knows in the state of his sins that he has a Lord who pardons him.

**[4:148] God does not like the utterance of evil words out loud, unless a person has been wronged. God is ever Hearer, Knower.**

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<sup>856</sup> Al-Qushayrī’s rephrases the verse here to show that the verb *kāna*, which sometimes refers to the past, can also refer to an ongoing state.



That which a person who has been wronged says about the one who has wronged him, by the permission of God, is not evil in the true sense of the word, but it is nonetheless a good thing to let the matter drop. As God Most High has said: *For the requital of an evil is an evil deed like it* (42:40). The requital is itself another evil action.

It is said that anyone who knows that his Protector hears feels shame in speaking freely regarding that to which his lower self calls him.

It is said *evil words out loud* are what you hear within yourself in your thinking ill thoughts about others. The elect take responsibility in their inward thoughts for that which, when heard [out loud] from ordinary people, might<sup>857</sup> be held against them.

***Unless (illā) a person has been wronged:*** Some say “not even (*wa lā*) the one who has been wronged”. Others say its meaning is: “but (*wa-lakinna*) a person who has been wronged” has the right to mention the one who has intentionally wronged him.

It is said that those who do not prefer praising the Real over defaming created beings come up empty handed in the present moment.

It is said that those who look to created beings with the eye of connecting to the Real, [seeing] that they are servants of God, will not loose the tongue of blame towards them.

A man says to his companion, “Out of respect for you, I will bear the lowliest<sup>858</sup> service to you, even beyond that which I would bear for my son.” When there is commitment like this between human beings, how much more worthy is the servant’s regard for this kind of refined behavior (*adab*) between him and His Protector!

It is said ***God does not like the utterance of evil words out loud*** among ordinary people, nor does He like that in the inward thoughts of the elect.

It is said ***the utterance of evil words out loud*** among ordinary people is that they describe God without permission or favor.

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<sup>857</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition which has been completed with the word *la ‘alla* from MS K117, f.56b.

<sup>858</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition, which has been completed with the word *adna* from MS K117, f.57a.

***The utterance of evil words out loud*** in describing created beings is that you say what the law does not permit and you describe the Real incorrectly, so that you are a liar regarding Him. [And it is what you say] in describing the deficiencies of the elect among created beings, even if there is truth in it.

***God is ever Hearer, Knower***

Hearer of what you say, knower of your defects. It means you do not say of others that which you know is the same in you.

It is said ***Hearer*** of what you say, ***Knower*** of the blamelessness of the one you defame. There is a threat in [the verse] to the defamer on behalf of the one who is innocent of what he has been accused.

It is said ***Hearer***, [addressed to] “O you who wrongs”, ***Knower*** [addressed to] “O you who has been wronged”. A threat to these and good news for those.

**[4:149] If you show good, or conceal it, or pardon evil, then surely God is ever Pardoning, Powerful.**

***If you show good***, taking on the good manners found in the law (*sharī‘a*) or ***conceal***, actualizing the precepts of the deeper reality (*ḥaqīqa*), ***or pardon evil***, adopting from God what He has entrusted you with in the most beautiful ways of behaving, ***then surely God is ever Pardoning*** of your defects, ***Powerful*** in causing you to attain what you love and to reach what you seek.

It is said ***if you show good***, you will be an example for humankind in what you practice and what you indicate for others according to what they have been guided to from the way of your practice. ***If you conceal it***, content with only His knowing it, and safeguarding yourselves from the evils of affectation, trusting that those of you who act for Him will have that seen and known by Him, ***or pardon evil***, i.e. you ignore what your lower selves call you to, then God will grant you His pardon for what you do. He is ***Powerful*** and can afflict you with that with which the oppressor afflicts. It will be a warning to them that they are heedless in witnessing the favor and an awakening to the fact that they should seek protection from being deprived of immunity and being abandoned so that they fall into discord and trial.

It is said *if you show good*, acting well towards people, *or conceal it*, praying for them in secret, *or pardon evil*, even if you have been wronged.

It is said show good towards those who act well towards you and be loyal in friendship and pray in secret for those who spare you from their evil. Pardon those who do evil to you with generosity and graciousness. You will find pardon from God according to what you yourself do, for surely your sins are more numerous. He is **Powerful** to give you in favor and blessings that which you cannot attain by taking vengeance or revenge.

**[4:150-151] Those who disbelieve in God and His messengers and seek to divide between God and His messengers, and say, ‘We believe in some, and disbelieve in some’, and seek to adopt a way between them. \*\* Those are the disbelievers truly; and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement.**

Regarding them He related that they add to the ugliness of their disbelief that which is considered blameworthy in their actions. Then He explained that He has doubled their chastisement as requital for their sin so that you will know that there is a place lying in wait for those who corrupt.

**[4:152] And those who believe in God and His messengers and do not seek to divide between any of them, those — We shall surely give them their wages. God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.**

When they believed in all of the messengers and confirmed everything to which they were commanded, they deserved acceptance and a beautiful recompense. The holding back of faith in some individuals is like holding back at certain periods of time. Just as He will not accept the faith of a person whose faith does not include all [...],<sup>859</sup> likewise He will not accept the faith of a person whose faith does not include all of what faith demands of him, since He made that a condition for its actualization and perfection. The allusion in this is to the fact that anyone who does not wholeheartedly enter into the covenant will not have so much as a sliver of the reality of communion. The Prophet (s) said: **The pilgrimage is [the day of] ‘Arafa.**<sup>860</sup> Anyone who cuts short the distance, even if he is from a deep ravine,<sup>861</sup> and then holds back from ‘Arafat the least bit, has not experienced the pilgrimage.

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<sup>859</sup> There is a blank in the Basyūnī edition that I was unable to clarify through MS K117, f.57a.

<sup>860</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān gives several references for this Hadith, including Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

<sup>861</sup> A reference to Qur’ānic verse 22:27: *They shall come from every deep ravine.*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: **The servant who has contracted with his master to be freed is still a servant to the last dirham.**<sup>862</sup>

**[4:153] The People of the Scripture will ask of you to cause a Book to be revealed to them from the heaven. They asked Moses for something greater than that, for they said, ‘Show us God openly’; so the thunderbolt seized them for their evildoing. They then took to themselves the [golden] calf after clear proofs had come to them; yet We pardoned that; and We bestowed upon Moses clear authority.**

The verse includes two kinds of unseemly acts that they did. The first was their asking to be shown [God] and the second was their worshipping the calf after clear signs had been made manifest to them. As for their asking to be shown [God], they were blameworthy because they impudently demanded that, even after their excuses should have been cut off by the occurrence of miracles. They were therefore not seeking the vision for instruction, nor as a means to confirm their faith, nor were they brought to that by an intensity of longing. Both acts were bad manners (*sū’ adab*). There is also the allusion to those who are content to have the calf as their object of worship. How can they bear witness to the Real when they submit to it?

It is said direct mystical knowledge (*‘irfān*) did not touch the innermost hearts (*asrār*) of the people. Because of that they clung with their intellects (*‘uqūl*) to a limited thing (*maḥdūd*), allowing that to be their object of worship.

**And we bestowed upon Moses clear authority:** manifest proof (*hujja zāhir*), indeed a light preserved from comparing God to other things (*tamthīl*) or stripping Him of His attributes (*ta’ṭīl*).

The **clear authority** is to have access (*taḥṣīl*) while declaring God incomparable (*tanzīh*), neither stripping God of His attributes (*ta’ṭīl*) or comparing Him to His creation (*tashbīh*).

It is said the **clear authority** is the power to hear the Speech (*al-khiṭāb*) without intermediary.

It is said the **clear authority** belongs to this community in the future, which will be their abiding in the state of their meeting [God]. In the tradition of the Vision, [the Prophet] (ﷺ) said: **You will not have only one vision in seeing Him.**<sup>863</sup>

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<sup>862</sup> This saying occurs in al-Qushayri’s commentary on Qur’ānic verse 2:14-15 but is not attributed to the Prophet there. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives several references for the Hadith, including Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

**[4:154] And We raised above them the Mount, by the covenant with them, and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate, bowing’; and We said to them, ‘Transgress not the Sabbath, and We took from them a firm covenant.**

The more signs were given to them outwardly, the more denial and rejection there was in their hearts. Receiving more communications did not benefit them, since the eyes of their hearts were not open to witnessing them. God Most High said: *But signs and warners do not avail a folk who will not believe* [10:101].

**[4:155] So, for their breaking their covenant and disbelieving in the signs of God, and slaying the prophets wrongfully, and for their saying, ‘Our hearts are covered up’ — nay, but God sealed them for their disbelief; so they do not believe, except for a few.**

Its meaning is: Because of their committing these prohibited acts (*manāhī*) and because of their being marked by these requitals (*majāzī*), We have caused them to alight at the dwellings of ignominy (*hawān*) and inflicted on them punishments of all kinds (*alwān*).<sup>864</sup>

It is said that the terrible misfortune of oppositional acts afflicted them cumulatively. Among the consequences of disobedient acts is being left to commit even more prohibited acts. By violating the covenant and not repenting, they were pulled towards their disbelief in the signs. Then, because of the misfortune of their disbelief, they were left to themselves until they slew the prophets (‘a) wrongfully. Then, because of the misfortune of that, they had the audacity to claim fullness in comprehension, saying “Our hearts are the vessels for all kinds of knowledge”.<sup>865</sup> God replied to them: **but God sealed them for their disbelief**, and He veiled them from the site of deep knowledge (‘*irfān*) so they wandered about in their errors.

**[4:156] And for their disbelief, and their uttering against Mary a tremendous**

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<sup>863</sup> See Lane 2:1775 for his explanation of the different versions of this Hadith. The Basyūnī edition has *lā tuḍammuna fī ru’yatihi*. Lane suggests that the literal meaning, “You will not straighten one another” is that each will have their own view of God. MS K117, 57b has the other version Lane mentions, which is *lā tuḍarruna fī ru’yatihi*, which he understands as meaning, “You will not differ from one another respecting [the truth of] the seeing Him”. Basyūnī adds a reference to the version of the Hadith that occurs in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, saying, “...you will see your Lord just as you see this moon”. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān gives numerous sources for the Hadith including al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Tirmidhī.

<sup>864</sup> I have put in a few of the Arabic words in transliteration here to show al-Qushayrī’s rhyming pattern.

<sup>865</sup> The phrase in this Qur’ānic verse, *Our hearts are covered up* (*qulūbunā ghulf*), is explained in commentaries such as *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās* to mean “our hearts can absorb any kind of knowledge” (trans. Mokrane Guezou at al-tafsir.com of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought).

*calumny.*

Disregard for the limit is error, just as diminishment or subtraction from the truth is error. Some people slandered Mary and accused her of fornication. Others transgressed the limit even further in a terrible calumny, saying her son was the son of God. Both of these groups fell into error.

It is said that Mary (*r*) was a friend (*waliyya*) of God through whom two groups became unfortunate: those who exceed all bounds (*ahl al-ifrāṭ*) and those who fall short (*ahl al-tafrīt*)<sup>866</sup> Just as there are those who reject His friends in lacking respect for them, there are those who believe in them and will therefore suffer no increase in difficulties. It is among this group that most of the great rise in rank.

**[4:157-8] *And for their saying, ‘We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God’. And yet they did not slay him nor did they crucify him, but he was given the resemblance. And those who disagree concerning him are surely in doubt regarding him. They do not have any knowledge of him, only the pursuit of conjecture; and they did not slay him for certain. Nay, God raised him up to Him. God is ever Mighty, Wise.***

It is said God caused the resemblance of [Jesus] to fall on one who slandered him, and he was killed and crucified in his place. It is said: The one who digs a grave for his brother falls into it”.

It is said [by others] that Jesus (‘*a*) said, “Whoever agrees to have my resemblance cast upon him so that he is killed in place of me will have the Garden,” and one of his companions agreed. It is said that when he patiently bore the injury (*talaf*), God did not deprive him of the recompense (*khalaf*).

It is said that because the friendship of this man with Jesus (‘*a*) was sound in his self (*nafs*), he became his friend in spirit (*rūḥ*) so that when Jesus (‘*a*) was raised up to the place of intimacy (*zulfa*), the spirit of this one who ransomed [Jesus] with himself was raised up to the place of nearness (*qurba*).

**[4:159] *And there is not one of the People of the Scripture but will assuredly believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a***

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<sup>866</sup> Al-Qushyari is making a play on words here by using the verbal nouns from two different forms of the same Arabic root. The groups referred to are the two mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

*witness against them.*

Because He ruled that there will be no security (*amāna*) for them at the time of despair, their faith (*īmān*) at that time will not benefit them. This tells us that what is taken into consideration comes through the security granted by the Real, not through the faith of the servant.

[4:160-4:161] *And because of the evildoing of some of those of Jewry, We have forbidden them certain good things that were lawful for them, and because of their barring from God's way, many.\* And because of their taking usury when they had been forbidden it, and their consuming people's wealth through falsehood, and We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful chastisement.*

It is said the committing of forbidden acts caused the prohibition of what had been [previously] allowed. Whoever commits a forbidden act outwardly is kept from what he had been finding in allowable states and the subtle kindnesses received in the inner secrets of his heart.

[4:162] *But those of them who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers, believing in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, and those who observe the prayer; and pay the alms, and those who believe in God and the Last Day — to them We shall surely give a great wage.*

[The verse refers to] the one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge*, the proof and judgement of which is not by blind following. Instead reflection (*naẓr*) has been put in its place to such an extent that there is no possibility of doubt in one's understanding ( *'aql*).

It is said the one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge* ascends from the limit of pondering demonstrative proof (*burhān*) to attain the realities of clear evidence (*bayān*).

It is said the one who is *firmly rooted in knowledge* is one whose knowledge is practiced to the degree that he benefits from knowledge that is hidden from others, as in the tradition: *To whoever practices what he knows, God grants knowledge of what he does not know.*<sup>867</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Neither Basyūnī or 'Abd al-Raḥmān give any references for this tradition. So far, I have been able to locate the Hadith only in al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's treatise *Bayān al-farq bayn al-sadr wa al-qalb wa al-fu'ād wa al-lubb*, translated by Nicholas Heer in "A Sufi Psychological Treatise" (*Muslim World* 51:2, 1961, paragraph 50, p. 84)

[The phrase] *those who observe prayer* is given the grammatical accusative inflection to indicate the laudative. Prayer is given distinction among other acts of worship in that it follows [the mention of] faith in most passages in the Qur'ān, and because God (s) gave the command for prayer directly to the Messenger (s) on the Night of the Mi'rāj without the intermediary of Gabriel ('a), and because of other reasons.

**A great wage:** The great wage is that which increases commensurate with what the work deserves.

[4:163] *We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah, and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron, and Solomon, and We gave to David the Inscribed Book.*

The singling out of the Prophet (s) from among the prophets is in [the call to] believe in [all of them] being singularly marked for distinction and merit. He singled out Noah based on what he deserved in station and singled out Our Messenger ('a) based on what he deserved. They shared in being singled out because each was an illustration in merit according to station. One was without parallel among his kind in ten<sup>868</sup> virtues, and the other was without parallel among his class in a thousand virtues.<sup>869</sup> The two share equally in singularity but one has ten virtues while the other has a thousand virtues.

[4:164] *And messengers We have told you of before, and messengers We have not told you of; and God spoke directly to Moses.*

God's way (*sunna*) regarding his friends (*awliyā'*) is to veil some and to make others known. This is also His way with the prophets ('a). He proclaims the names of some and summarizes the individual details of others. Belief is obligatory in all the prophets as a whole and individually, just as respect is obligatory for all of the friends as a whole and individually. Likewise, He veils the states of some servants while making the states of others apparent. With regard to the states that he makes apparent, he asks for them to keep them pure. With

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<sup>868</sup> The translation follows the word *'āshara* from MS K117, f. 58a rather than the word *ghayr* found in the Basyūnī edition.

<sup>869</sup> MS K117, f.58a adds another line: The two share equally in their singularity but one has ten virtues while the other has a thousand virtues.



regard to what He veils from them, He jealously protects their hearts from viewing their states as qualifying them for the privilege He has designated for them in the realities in their meanings.

[His words] *and God spoke directly to Moses* tells of His selecting [Moses] to hear His speech without intermediary.

[4:165] *messengers bearing good tidings and warning so that people might have no argument against God after the messengers. God is ever Mighty, Wise.*

He informed created beings of the measure of their worth. He explained that He sent the messengers to them and that they should look to them alone for the collecting of their reward and avoiding what would make them deserving of punishment. [He explained] that created beings have no [other] way to the comfort they seek or the hurt they wish to avoid in the present or the end.

*So that people might have no argument against God after the messengers. God is ever Mighty, Wise:* How could anyone have a need to argue against God when God has addressed them<sup>870</sup> in accordance their understandings (‘uqūl)?

[4:166] *But God bears witness with what He has revealed to you; He has revealed it through His knowledge; and the angels also bear witness; and God suffices as a Witness.*

In mentioning His knowledge of [the Prophet’s] sincerity, God consoled him for the lies created beings told about him. Therefore He said: *God suffices as a Witness.*

[4:167-4:169] *Surely those who disbelieve and bar from the way of God, they have indeed gone far astray. Surely those who disbelieve and who have done wrong, it is not for God to forgive them, neither to guide them to any path, except for the path of Hell, abiding, therein, forever; and for God that is an easy matter.*

He made their barring believers from following the truth the equivalent of their disbelief in God. [In equating these two] God Most High extols the rights of His friends (*awliyā`*) just as He exalts His own right. Then He said: *Surely those who disbelieve and who have done*

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<sup>870</sup> The Basyūnī edition has a typographical error here. It should read *khāṭabahum*, as it does in MS K117, f.58a.

**wrong**. He made their wrong doing (*ẓulm*) the same as their disbelief and attached the justly deserved abiding punishment to both of these. Even if wrongdoing is not like disbelief in deserving the threat of endless duration, the misfortune of it is that it is not unlikely that God will abandon those who do it until they succumb to disbelief.

**[4:170] *O people, the Messenger has now come to you with the truth from your Lord; so believe, it is better for you. And if you disbelieve, then surely to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and God is ever Knowing, Wise.***

“O you people of the Book”: He states that He (*s*) is not in need of them. If they believe, they will have acquired good fortune for themselves. If they disbelieve, they will have drawn afflictions upon themselves. The Real (*t*) is beyond being described by the beauty<sup>871</sup> of anyone’s consent (*wifāq*) or the deficiency of anyone’s opposition (*khilāf*).

***And if you disbelieve, then surely to God belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth:*** it means that if they have abandoned the practice of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*) in their actions, they [nonetheless] cannot leave the reality of their being His servants as created beings. God Most High said: *There is none in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the Compassionate One as a servant* [19:93].

**[4:171] *O People of the Scripture, do not go to extremes, in your religion and do not say about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word which He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say, ‘Three’. Refrain, it is better for you. Verily, God is but One God. Glory be to Him, that He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. God suffices as a Guardian.***

Their going to extremes in their religion was their following their own opinion, since they described what they worshipped in the likeness of created beings. There was also their being contradictory, since they said one is three and three is one. The perseverance in what is false only increases what is false.

**[4:172-4:173] *The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, neither would the angels who are nigh. Whoever disdains to worship Him, and waxes proud, He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them. \* As for those who believed, who did righteous deeds, He will pay them in full their wages, and He will give them more of His bounty;***

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<sup>871</sup> The word “ignorance” (*jahl*) occurring in Basyūnī’s edition is clearly a manuscript error, as he himself states in a footnote. He suggests “perfection” (*kamāl*) as being the correct word. The translation here follows MS K117, f.58a, which has the word *tajammul*.

How can they disdain the worship of Him when one's honor and dignity (*sharaf*) is through worship? How can they be too proud to humble themselves when one's ruin is in being too proud? Because of this matter, the first words the Messiah spoke were: *Lo! I am God's servant* [19:30]. The servant becomes beautiful in his humility towards masters. This is something well known and without doubt.

*Neither would the angels who are nigh* does not imply that [the angels] are superior to the Messiah because He was only addressing them in accordance with their beliefs. They believed in the superiority of the angels over human beings.

[4:173 cont'd] *and as for them who disdain and are too proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement, and they shall not find for themselves, besides God, any friend or helper.*

The *painful chastisement* is that they will never attain it after they have come to know His Majesty. When what they know becomes indisputable, they will know that they have been left behind. Their sorrow on that day for what has slipped away from them will be their most intense punishment.

[4:174] *O people, a proof has now come to you from your Lord,*

The proof (*burhān*) is what appeared in their hearts of the testimonial witnessings (*shawāhid*) of the Real.

*and We have revealed to you a manifest light.*

It is His speech. The pondering of its meanings is the means to their insight (*istibṣār*).

[4:175] *As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and He will guide them to Him by a straight path.*

*He will surely admit them to mercy from Him*: the particle indicating the future (the letter *sīn*) indicates that He will protect them at the time of death on account of their faith (*īmān*) in what is to come, just as He has honored them with knowledge and faith in the present.

[4:175 cont'd] *and He will guide them to Him by a straight path.*

This guidance is His honoring them in knowing that this guidance is a bounty from God for them, not because they deserve it, and not because of their seeking, effort, toil or pains.

[4:176] *They will ask you for a pronouncement. Say: 'God pronounces to you concerning indirect heirs. If a man perishes, having no children, but he has a sister, hers is half of what he leaves, and he is her heir, if she has no children. If there be two sisters, theirs are two-thirds of what he leaves; if there be siblings, men and women, then the male shall receive the equivalent of the portion of two females. God makes clear to you, lest you go astray; and God has knowledge of all things'.*

He cut short their disputes regarding the apportioning of inheritance by proclaiming the formula determined for them, for truly wealth is an object of desire for humankind, and the lower selves (*nufūs*) are prone to greed. If the appropriate amounts were not decisively determined, doubts would arise from the use of independent judgement (*ijithād*), and this would lead to contention and mutual attacks. This summation [of the portions of inheritance] definitively establishes the inheritance amounts for the disputants. His designation of inheritance rights for women – even when their closest relatives do not defend them – shows consideration for their weak position. [On the other hand], the preference given to males over them is because of the burdens [they have been given] in providing and seeking income, and in supporting [women].

Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, author of this Sufi commentary on the Qurʾān, is a major eleventh-century scholar of Nishapur, an intellectual and cultural crossroads of the Muslim world. This commentary is well known by the title *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* [Subtleties of the allusions] and has endured through the centuries as an important Sufi exegesis. Its verse-by-verse treatment of the Qurʾān teaches a mystical vision of reality. In addition, the commentary includes numerous references to traditions of the Prophet, explanations of ethical and mystical dimensions of religious life, stories of the prophets, and anecdotes about earlier mystics. This translation is based on the authoritative Arabic edition of *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt* edited by Ibrāhīm Basyūnī and uses two additional manuscript sources. Part I includes al-Qushayrī's extensive Qurʾānic commentary on sūrahs 1 through 4.

### About the translator

Kristin Zahra Sands is a Professor and the Harlequin Adair Dammann Chair of Islamic Studies at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She has a bachelor's degree from the New School, and a master's and doctorate from New York University. Her interests include Sufism, Qurʾānic exegesis, religion and media, and political theology. She is the author of *Sufi Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam* and has published numerous articles on mystical exegesis, teaching Islam, and Islam on the Internet.

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